

THE
VICTIM OF FANCY.
VOL. II.

THE
VICTIM OF FANCY.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY A LADY,

Author of the CONQUESTS of the HEART.

VOL. II.

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.

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MDCCLXXXVII.

THE
VICTIM OF FANCY.

LETTER XXXIII.

VINCENT BURELL, *Esq.* to FREDERICK
BURELL, *Esq.*

O! sweet to follow nature's powerful voice,
And make the friends of nature friends of choice.

THESE were almost the last, soft, and energetic sounds which I caught from the most beautiful lips in the world; and but for them, with my few books, my drawing, and my flute, I could pass my time happily enough in the little retreat you have placed me in.

I had determined to be as reserved as you have been in trusting me with half your secret; but a day is passed without my seeing more of the angel to whom in my first lines I alluded, and I can debar myself from writing no longer: yet, believe me, I disapprove not in you what I know to be the effect of the most delicate honour and the tenderest affection to the whimsical lady to whom you have thought proper to devote yourself. For my part, I have passed fire through all the beauties of France, Spain, and Italy, from nineteen to three and twenty, without a flaw in my heart; yet here in a corner which, had I fled for security, I should have chosen, I must behold an assemblage of all that is enchanting and all that is winning in the soft graces of woman—I must behold the mild blush of modest benevolence, which shrinks from observation, like the first tints of the morning mantling on the cheek of beauty and sensibility. My heart was taken by surprize; and as I shut the door of her carriage, as I saw it depart, the last waving of her delicate hand fixed every link of the strong and irrevocable chain which now binds me to her for ever.

When you read this, you will think it scarce possible for me to bear my confinement any longer; and I shall wish this Werter, of which I am to fancy myself the author, with all its beauties, in the bottom of the ocean, if it is yet to detain me here; and as to quitting Bath immediately after being introduced to your lady in my borrowed character, absolutely I cannot think of it. In short, I must know more of this charming woman; and as you leave me ignorant of your fair one's name, my remaining there may not perhaps inform me of any thing more than you wish me to be acquainted with. I will inform you how I saw this lady, and how I became thus penetrated.—

My lad, whom I had sent in for a drawing I had a mind to finish as I leaned over an old wall at the back of the garden, returned to me with a long story of the ensign, whom I think you know lodges here, having been taken suddenly ill; and that a young lady, who was come to see him, had been near fainting, and was now sitting in my apartment to recover herself:—he came back to ask me if I would have him go in. You know the curiosity one has, one knows not why, in a retired place to see people. I determined to go myself, especially as the maid said she was very handsome. I was just within doors, when the ensign and his sister met me. We are already much attached to each other, and his sister asked me to walk a few minutes in the air with him, whilst she

ran to thank the sweetest creature in the world who had come to their assistance. My curiosity was increased; but Joannah left us, and I attended her brother. I am the confident of a passion of his, and hoped this might be the lady; but I was mistaken; with this lady he was unacquainted; he recollected only having once observed her on her being taken suddenly ill when he was at the pump-room. We just walked to the end of the little enclosure here, and he motioned, I believe out of compliment to me, to return. There is a small green between the garden and the house, which we were just entering, when, near the door, I saw the fair and elegant form which has enchanted me, simple and unadorned in a white morning dress, which left only her delicate hands visible. As she approached, her eyes were fixed on us; I had almost fancied they were fixed on me. We had scarcely reached her, when the sister of the young ensign joined us. In the overflowing of a grateful heart she broke in upon the thanks he was offering, and introduced me to the loveliest of human beings. I attempted to say something which might convey the idea I had conceived of her, and the fire which her fine eyes had lighted up in my soul. She seemed in haste to return; and the eagerness of my looks, I fear, disconcerted her. I accompanied her over the short meadow which divides us from the road; and could not refrain from fixing my eyes on her, whilst my whole soul was wrapt in attention. Her accents, soft, melodious, yet full of energy, are framed at once to awaken and subdue every passion of the heart.

When the carriage drew up, I felt chagrined and disappointed, and certainly handed her into it very awkwardly. Fortunately she had left her cloak in the house, and I gained a moment's reprieve, and stood looking under the white hat which before had half-shaded her lovely face from my observation—I will describe her to you such as she now appeared to me; I will leave you to judge whether she was to be resisted.

I will begin then with what first raised in me a more than ordinary attention: Her fine-formed shape, her delicate shoulders, have that elegant turn, that remarkable fall, which is so seldom met with, and which alone would give grace to a figure even less beautifully regular than hers: her complexion has that blue and delicate whiteness, which seems formed to discover, through the clear transparency of its surface, every emotion which passes in the soul: her eyes are bright, intelligent, piercing; I never saw any so highly animated, so lucidly charming: the beautiful arch of her dark-brown eye-brows rises through the blue veins which wander over her noble forehead, and add grace and expression to her whole countenance. There is, when she is silent, a languor in her fair face which wins, which softens, which attracts—which is, in short, irresistible—I have often thought of it, since she quitted me—and the sweet glow on her cheek was, I fear, rather the blush of sensibility than health—yet that clear and rosy redness of her mouth, her beautiful mouth, formed on the most enchanting model of love, surely it must be the tincture of health, as well as the criterion of loveliness—I will hope so at least.—The profusion of her bright chestnut hair, in spite of art and fashion, retains that sweet waviness which shews the remains of its native beauties; while the silky brightness of those ringlets which are yet permitted to flow on her graceful shoulders, prove that to nature only they are indebted for their negligent and elegant curl.—While I beheld her, I silently applied to her the most charming line of the most charming poet in the world—a line which I can never remember without increased admiration. The harmonious cadence of it suited admirably the flow of my ideas at the moment—Ah!—“A vermil-tinctur'd lip, Love-darting eyes, and tresses like the morn,” indeed thought I.—I had not time to

contemplate every beauty, but her whole figure, her expression of countenance, her animated air, is that in which a painter would embody genius and sensibility.

When the servant returned, I had just sense enough to ask if she resided at Bath. I bowed, and the carriage drove off. How I envied the beggar that asked a few halfpence of me, and then followed, without an idea, the vehicle which contained her! How I envied Villers and his sister, who the next day conversed with her! but she said not a word of me; and perhaps with this subject, which I could dwell on for ever, I have only tired you. I have, however, been very sincere. You find how it is with me, and you must know it impossible for me to remain here with patience.

I hope you are by this time at Bath, and returned from that attendance to your friend C——, which so unexpectedly and unseasonably called you away; if not, I have ordered the boy to come on with this to you. In retiring here I satisfied your over delicacy shall I say?—yet to that perhaps I owe the having seen the lovely woman who has subdued me; at least, I should not otherwise have seen her in that winning and amiable light in which she here presented herself to me.

Send me an answer directly, or come yourself, that I may consult with you on fulfilling your schemes, but, above all, on my own enlargement; yet believe me still at your command, and that I shall ever remain,

Your affectionate brother
VINCENT BURELL.

LETTER XXXIV.

Miss MORVEN to Colonel MORVEN.

LORD S—— was here this morning, whom I think I mentioned I expected, and presented his son to me—presented him as a lover. Confused and surprized, I looked at my aunt: she was not ignorant that this step was intended, but in compliment to my delicacy she said it was that she spared me the embarrassment of knowing it.—Ah! my dear aunt, was it not that you rather suspected the refusal I should certainly have given, had you told me the intention of this introduction, as you called it?

I have reason to think I displeased my aunt; yet, surely, it was necessary I should be explicit in acknowledging how unexpected such a declaration was to me. Could I wish to appear to receive the visits of Lord S——, to make a parade of refusing his offers?

Something like this I said; but Lord S—— seemed to regard it as only the necessary language of a young lady on such occasions. I was going to reply to this insinuation, which I had heard but with impatience, when my aunt interrupted me, and expatiated in terms which confused me on the frankness of her niece: yet as she knew her, she said, to be wholly disengaged, there could be no impropriety in her having consented to, or my having received the visit—and concluded, looking at me, with adding, that having been till now ignorant of Mr. S——'s attachment, I could not possibly be sufficiently a judge of my own heart to give an immediate answer.

How I blushed, my dear brother, conscious of the weakness of that heart, and of the passion—must I say it?—already glowing there! I looked down, unable to reply, and

in a moment my imagination was possessed by that nameless stranger, whose image is so strongly imprinted in my mind. My aunt kindly changed the conversation, and I beheld her ignorant of my real emotions, whilst a sense of guilt oppressed me at the reflection.— Apparently stupid, I remained lost in a variety of thoughts, till Lord S——, after a short stay, arose to take his leave. My aunt attended him out of the room; but his son, who had taken no more part in the conversation than myself, remained. He has been ill, occasioned, as Lord S—— had told me, by the cold he caught in assisting us in our way to Dr. C——'s. I soon recollected myself; but when I would have expressed the concern I really felt for his indisposition, he made light of it, and attributed it to other causes.— After some hesitation, he apologized for that abruptness which had been used towards me. The conversation became insensibly more interesting, and he at length made professions which pained me to hear, and more than once mentioned his hopes, from my being disengaged? He seemed to rely on that idea with certainty, and, as to himself, with expectation.

Surely, my dear brother, I was not wrong, though the sound half died away on my lips, as I would have uttered that perhaps he was misinformed, and, in short, I was not so free as had been represented to him, and as was believed by those who represented it. By acknowledging this, said I, perhaps I may forfeit your esteem, but I shall be contented if I have reason to think I have preserved your peace.

I will not pretend to paint to you his actions and expressions; they were those of astonishment, and, I saw it with pain, of disappointment. Overcome by surprize, he expressed himself only by extravagancies—whilst he lavished on me a thousand encomiums I yet blush at so little deserving. After some minutes, which passed in incoherent exclamations, he turned hastily to me, who, confused and scarce knowing what I had said, attended to him in silence. My eyes shunned his as he seemed to read the agitation which spoke through the varying crimson of my cheeks. At length—I will hope that you know me too well to attribute to vanity my repeating his words—after a moment's pause, during which he seemed struggling to conceal his feelings, he addressed me in a low but energetic voice.

I am persuaded, said he, that Miss Morven will forgive me in those transports I had too much weakness to conceal. I had flattered myself, madam; I am undeceived: but I yet behold in you, noble woman, all which my heart had taught me to believe you, the unblemished child of sincerity and nature, and ever inviolable shall be the confidence you have placed in me.

I bowed and would have spoken, but with a quick voice he interrupted me. Miss Morven, he said, your aunt favoured my expectation; let me appear to her, to my father, weak, capricious, all that is unworthy of you: what I am, let my actions express to you—your mind is too just not to believe them—your heart too tender not to pity me.— Sacred and beautiful drops! it is mine to excite you, it is another's to wipe them away.

The tears had not overflowed my eyes, and I had flattered myself that he had not seen those weak and only tributes I could pay to his generosity. Again I would have spoken, and made him all the acknowledgments with which my heart seemed nigh bursting; but he had hurried out of the room. I stepped after him, however, to the door: he was standing too visibly affected just without it, and, when he saw me, was going; but, putting my hand on his arm, I detained him, and passionately I expressed to him my gratitude, my esteem, my admiration.—Lovely woman! said he, and you forget that at

this minute you are destroying me.—I could say no more; he darted across the hall, and, flinging himself into his sedan, covered his eyes with his hand, whilst, filled with a thousand emotions, and happy to escape observation, I returned to my chamber.

During our conversation, my aunt had received a message from a lady of her acquaintance, who is ill here, and wished to see her. She is not returned; and, left to myself, I have sat down to transmit those actions and emotions, which so nearly concern me, to you. But I am not contented with myself. In refusing Burell I followed the dictates of reason and justice. I esteem him; I have even an affection for him; but never could I love him with that marked and decided preference which could authorize me to be his. Unbiassed and unprepossessed, such was my motive, and my only motive, for rejecting an affection which I have reason to believe so sincere. But it is otherwise with Mr. S——. I think sometimes, if I had not seen this stranger who has seduced my heart, there was something in his manners which might have won me. Not to reason, not to justice, is he then sacrificed, but to whom? To the acquaintance of an hour; of a minute I may say; and to the idle prepossessions of a fanciful and flighty being, misled perhaps by her own imagination—to the vain day dreams of a maid in love—a being unworthy of the attachment with which he has honoured her.—I repeat I am displeased with myself, my dear brother. I can write no more on this subject, and almost fear to think of it. I look at your picture and blush. I have acted, surely, in a manner unworthy of your sister—unworthy, let me say, of myself; and was my aunt here at this minute, I would lay my whole mind open to her—I would confess my error; and be guided by her directions. I would do any thing to be reconciled to my own heart.

LETTER XXXV.

ILL at ease, and discontented with my own conduct, I quitted my pen, and, seated at my music, I soon forgot every emotion of sorrow. You know my passion for the organ. There is a small one fixed in our apartments here, which was a principal inducement with your friend Burell to secure them for us. It is a fine-toned instrument, and when I draw from it the divine strains of Handel—when, in a low voice, which seems to mingle with its sounds, I accompany it, my soul seems hovering on my lips; all that is earthly disappears from before me; the fervor of devotion rises in my heart; I forget the bands which unite me to mortality, and feel myself as if conversing with the blest of heaven!—To me, in the first harpsichord, there is some clash of string, which, like a bad actor in a play, reminds me of the mechanism of the piece—wrapped in attention, I have sometimes lost it in a degree, but never wholly—but from an organ every note is harmony.—As to a piano forte, it may speak to the ear, but never did it reach the soul.

My aunt not returning, I continued playing, and was never in my life less inclined to disengage myself, never less inclined to think of that Werter, I have before so warmly admired, but Dr. C—— was announced. He complimented me in his fatherly manner on my execution. Perhaps, if in any thing I excel, it may be in this science of sensibility, and he obliged me to continue at my instrument.—I flatter myself that this worthy man has some partiality for your Theresa.

We afterwards fell into conversation, and, I do not know how it was, insensibly returned to the old topic Werter. He was almost as severe as ever to him: he talked of his cruelty and his crime to Charlotte, whose felicity he said Werter alone had destroyed; and had robbed her, not undeservedly, of the affection of a worthy husband, as well as the peace and innocence of her own heart.

But it was not Werter alone, my brother; it was her own want of prudence, of propriety, of strength of mind, which thus destroyed the peace both of Charlotte and her husband. It was no doubt intended, that Charlotte should be represented as culpable, and that in the highest degree. She it was who lost Werter to the world, to herself, and to heaven. She saw the passion which preyed on him, and repressed it not, till, at length, unable to be quenched, it destroyed the reason of her unfortunate lover. Flattered and moved by his affection, without intention of guilt, she suffered it to continue, till her whole heart was, like his, subdued. At the moment of first seeing him, she was, in the face of heaven, the wife of another: from that moment her crime commenced; and the fall of Werter, the distress of Albert, the failure of her own heart from virtue, were in that situation but natural consequences of giving way to the preference which she felt for him.

As I allowed one of them to be blameable, Dr. C—— was contented. Charlotte, he said, was, in general, thought innocent; but with me, my dear brother, she has never been accounted so: yet I own I admire in her that noble effort of the moment, in which virtue returned in all its force to her bosom, and triumphed there; and from that dangerous period she emerges like the sun from the morning mist, and rises superior to a whole life of cold and inanimate virtue, which, uninterrupted and unmolested, has kept the even tenor of its way. It is true, the virtue which has avoided, is more pure and unsullied than that which has resisted temptation; yet the effort of her who turns prudently back from a precipice, is by no means equal to that of the wanderer, whose feet, having slipped over a part of it, still descending with encreasing velocity, regains, by her own exertions, the

right path in which she had at first trodden:—the former has avoided the danger, the latter has conquered it. And, alas! the frequency of those that fall, but too plainly evinces the imprudence of the trial, which to tempt is folly the most dangerous, and which not to fear is unpardonable presumption.—

There is nothing, I know, new in this simile; but I could not find a better, and Dr. C—— had the goodness to attend to me.

I thought at that minute of the numbers who fall and are lost in the devouring gulph of perdition. I looked towards heaven—children of error as we all are, my eyes filled with tears, when I thought of the severity which some of them experience.—I looked up towards him, who tells the sinner to turn from his wickedness and live, who strengthens the hearts of the weak. Be it mine, Father of Mercy! said I, never to transgress thy laws; be it mine also to pity those who do!—When we stretch forth the hand of compassion to the feeble, when we raise them from the gulph which should open to receive them, does it return to us sullied by their guilt, or does the tincture of their crimes overspread it? Let us fly their contagion; but, in doing so, let us not suffer it to extend to others; let us not, careful of our own security alone, suffer it to destroy for ever those who are already infected.

Once, my brother, I had the happiness to raise from the dust a daughter of imprudence and misfortune, and, removed from scenes where infamy was become familiar, her heart opened to repentance, tranquillity was restored to her bosom, and, with a small assistance, she now passes her life in that honest industry which once she conceived to be degrading to her. She has now learned the happy and necessary lesson, that, as no life passed in virtue can be contemptible, no one sullied with vice can be otherwise. At the time, my aunt, who is rather severe in her morality, blamed me; but a year has since elapsed, and I will hope not her expectations, but mine will be fulfilled.

I have run from my subject; yet that which Dr. C—— afterwards introduced was infinitely interesting, as well as distressing to me. He talked of the folly and the evil tendency of those books which set forth the violence of a passion at first sight, and the impossibility of ever subduing it. He treated their representations, generally speaking, as both improbable and unnatural.

On such a subject I dared not trust myself; I remained therefore silent, and he proceeded.

They were passions, he said, which were seldom known to exist, and, when they were, most frequently produced error and misfortune. They were, if ever, he said, to be dreaded from those people who suffered themselves to be guided by fancy and imagination only.

I was affected, as he pointed out to me the weakness I had felt myself subdued by—a weakness to which I saw his penetration made him fear I might be sometime liable.

Dr. C——, said I, interrupting him, is a father: I revere his council as such. I am the child of fancy, and my weakness is to be dreaded. I bow to the reproof you now honour me with; it shall be my endeavour to profit by it.

He seemed moved, and applauded that candor and openness to conviction, which to forfeit is to become mean and ignoble; it is the weakness of ungenerous souls. As he rose to leave me, he condescended to make an apology.—Forgive me, amiable child, said he, and do not say reproof, but advice: but where I see the rare union of a person and

mind so excelling as that of the lady's before me, how can I avoid marking out that propensity which it is possible, and I am assured only possible, might lead even with her to error.—As he said this, he kindly pressed my hand, and, unwilling further to distress me, quitted me rather hastily.

Left to myself, tears relieved me. He knew not what then passed in my heart; you only, my dear brother, know the whole of its weakness and its emotions, which in all their folly lay open before you. As I recite them, I am displeased with myself. The trial has come, and I have failed; but I am not likely to recover. When I would contemplate your picture, another idea presents itself to me. That dear and faithful resemblance, did I ever think I should behold it with regret, with fear and impatience? But, ah! my brother, I feel it, mind and person; I am not what I was. “Whence is this faintness in my feeble mind? Why has its noble energy decreased?” I know not why, but a cloud of melancholy hangs over me; my spirits seem all retired to my heart; they are now only capable of increasing its agitations; a languid fever at this minute presses on my faculties; tears dim my eyes. I could almost persuade myself—but I shall hope soon to see you: I must then be well; when I shall receive you, all sickness must subside, all emotions but those of affection for you.

My aunt is returned; I must exert myself. In her presence I am always well, but I suffer for it when alone.

LETTER XXXVI.

AFTER a succession of all the passions of the heart; alone, seated in the stillness of the night, I watch over the dear woman who now lies sick beside me, and every emotion returns to my mind.

Shall I not blush, when I recount to you, my dear brother, the deception, which, trusting to my wild and ungoverned imagination, has been practised, and has succeeded against me? I have discovered that stranger; to whom my soul seemed instantaneously, almost involuntarily allied, and I have found in him the brother of Burell. My eyes are no longer in darkness; I have beheld—but I will endeavour to look back with calmness, and describe the sensations which the past hours have given rise to.

As I cast my eyes on the bed at the side of which I sit, I feel them return with all their violence; I feel myself overcome by that torrent of tenderness and pity which breaks in upon me.

Forgive me: I perceive that I raise expectation in you which I delay to gratify; but with the slow and feeble expressions of my pen, I will endeavour to trace out the moments leading to that which now beholds me doubtfully and tremulously watching.—But I repeat I will relate to you all which has arisen in the past hours, the pangs which they have cost me.

When my aunt returned from her attendance on her sick friend, I left my pen to join her. She saw, I believe, the disorder of my spirits, and advised me, hastily I thought, to take the air in the chariot; and I, happy at once to avoid her company and observation, willingly obeyed her, and went out with my own maid only.

I speak sincerely when I assure you, that, perplexed with a thousand reflections, I thought not of the road I had been driven, till the carriage stopped, and Sally asked if I would alight. I felt my cheeks glow, and my mind irresolute, when I saw we were at the side of the road which led to the house where I had visited the ensign and his sister—where I had met—good heaven! how little could I have imagined it?—with the brother of Burell. I was sending in the maid to enquire after the health of Mr. Villers, when I saw his sister coming towards me. Her brother, she told me, grew rapidly better, and, mingled with a thousand expressions of gratitude, she told me, through the interposition of the gentleman, he had seen a lady to whom he had long been attached, and from whom he had carefully concealed both his passion and his sickness. He had hoped she might pity him; she had done something more, and, with the prospect of happiness before him, health seems to attend his wishes.

How I sympathized with the tender pleasure which glowed on her sisterly cheek, and sparkled through the drops of affection in her eyes! For once, however, I was prudent, and excused myself from stopping; but she would not leave me, till she had told me that the young gentleman was gone from them: she believed he would not return again. As she said so, I felt an involuntary pain at my heart. I repeated the words, and in a moment hurried away. Forgetting the little prudence of the moment before, I enquired if she knew where, but she could not inform me. A gentleman had been there in the morning whilst he was out with her brother; and had waited for him near half an hour with signs of the most violent emotion: he had then left a note, which perusing when he came home, he had immediately quitted them. His servant, she said, was to return and pack up what he had left behind, and she supposed therefore he was only at Bath. I had some command of myself; for I enquired no further. She quitted me, and the carriage was driving on, when a beggar, whom I had before seen there, attracted my attention. I stopped; I remembered him: he had once importuned me, and called my eyes from an object how infinitely more agreeable, how much more dangerous also!—But these thoughts, which occupied me on seeing him, vanished in a moment; I forgot even the cause of them, and surprize remained my only emotion. You shall hear.

As I held out my hand with a trifle to him, he put something into mine—it was a sealed paper, but had no direction. As I looked at it in suspence, he struck down a bye-path.—The chaise drove on—I opened it, and, judge my feelings, read these words—

“You seek the author of Werter: if you really wish to converse with him, to be satisfied of his opinions, his intentions, it is now only that you can be so.”

“To the world he will yet remain unknown; but seize the present moment, and to you he will stand revealed; at Bath you may now find him. Suffer your carriage to drive to the left side of the Circus, dismiss it, and a few paces will conduct you to the house where he chuses to remain unknown. The door shall be open; enquire for the stranger residing there, and your steps shall be conducted to the author of Werter.”—

That project of enthusiasm and fancy which once so warmly animated me, had lain neglected;—but this billet in a moment recalled every idea I had cherished of discovering the author of Werter: It again seemed to occupy me with that force which in other days I have so often described to you.

I looked on the billet: that it could be a deception, never entered my head: I determined to follow its dictates. I did follow them, and beheld myself the dupe, not only of another’s artifice, but of my own weakness.

I went, (forgive me, my brother,) I sent home the carriage, but I took Sally to accompany me. I had no fears; but alone to visit a stranger, something in my heart seemed to forbid it. I entered the house trembling with the eagerness of expectation, and made the enquiry. A female servant shewed me into a back room on the first floor. When she opened the door to admit me, I sent my eyes forward with a degree of earnestness which you may better conceive than I explain. I saw nobody; but she desired me to be seated, and left me, as she said, to inform the gentleman. I sate down in a chair which stood near a small writing-table, in a state of wavering expectation;—when casting my eyes on an open paper on the table, I saw it addressed to me. Is there a term which can express my wonder and confusion on beholding the lines which at that minute I perused, and here transcribe for you.

“To Miss Theresa Morven.—Forgive, beautiful woman, what an unconquerable and hopeless passion has inspired. Look not with eyes of aversion, but pity on him, who, *bound by no vows*, wishes only to acknowledge himself as your admirer. Forgive, I repeat, the man who thus dares, yet dreads, to throw himself at your feet.”

I looked over it in an instant, and, though I understood not the whole, I found myself deceived and entangled I knew not by whom. Trembling and indignant, it fell from my hand, and I hastily attempted to quit the room; but at the moment, rushing from an adjoining apartment, and impeding my flight with his knees, I beheld the figure and heard the voice of Mrs. Aylesby’s Frank. I heard his voice, yet, whilst my astonishment and the confusion of my thoughts kept me silent, the words he uttered were lost to me. Some slight remembrances of my own, some suspicions of my aunt’s which I had little regarded, now recurred to me. I wished to convey every idea of my soul in a look, and saying only,—Where, Mr. Hyde, is Ruth? attempted to pass him; but he spread out his arms to detain me, and I was almost overpowered with the passions which swelled at my heart. I could not speak, but my silence expressed all that I felt. He let fall his extended arms, and, still kneeling, wrapt them round himself. My hand was already on the lock of the door, when his voice, in a deep and resolute tone, broke irresistibly upon me and detained me. His accents seem still to ring in my ears; and I shudder, as I repeat to you the dreadful words, which, like a bolt from heaven, seemed to transfix me.—Miss Morven, said he, I seek not to detain you by promises you have a right to think false; I wish not to alarm you by expressions of frenzy, nor to shock your tender and delicate nature with the sight of me wounded and senseless at your feet; but fly me not, I conjure you, unheard. I wish not, I repeat, to terrify you; but the weapons of death are in my possession, and on you—on this minute only, depends the eternal salvation or perdition of the wretch before you.

Terrified beyond the power of utterance, I turned—I beheld him fixed to one spot, the cold firmness of despair in his countenance, and no passion but horror seemed to remain in my heart. At once it seemed to swallow up every other before glowing there. A chill and overcoming damp spread over my whole frame, and dreading to retreat, unable to support myself, I sunk into a seat.—He remained silent, and seemed for a moment unconscious even that I staid, and I had time a little to recover myself; when at last, seeming to collect his faculties, he said, in a less dreadful tone, Miss Morven, you will then at least hear me. Unable to contend with him, I bowed in silence, and remaining still in the same attitude he began to speak; but the intention he had hinted at recurred to me, and, almost incoherent with agitation, I asked for the weapons. He produced from his

pocket a pistol: as he delivered it into my hand, my whole blood seemed to congeal. I laid it on the table near me, and, scarce able to support myself, leaning my head on one hand, with the other I secured it, as I paid that attention to him he had first insisted on my promising. After a few minutes profound silence, he addressed me: my agitation was somewhat subsided, and I think I can remember his words.

You have condescended, or, rather, madam, said he, I have obliged you to hear me; but in your countenance, so animated and expressive, I read all that I am to fear, and all I ought to have expected. Till the moment of executing the wild fallacy I have indulged myself in, I hoped I know not what, and till the instant of its completion I saw not all my error. Mad with a passion, which, from its birth, I looked on as desperate, I have forgotten the distance which every way must separate me from Miss Morven; yet, at least, believe me, that in pursuing it, madam, I have broken no vows—

I looked at him, and my indignation now burst from my lips. You boast, repeated I, with an energy which a moment before seemed to have forsaken me, that you have broken no vows, and you account then for nothing the abuse of confidence reposed in you by a sensible and tender heart! What is the breaking of vows—what are the ties of oaths, compared to that strong and indissoluble bond by which a feeling and delicate mind had united itself to yours? Your actions, Mr. Hyde, can only regard me as they concern my Ruth. Go then to her, acknowledge to her, if it be possible atone for them—

He interrupted me. To her, to every one but you, madam, I can exculpate myself—to you, madam, only is my guilt; and by you, severe as I know your judgment, should death close the moment of my confession, by you, madam, I must be heard. On your promise have I relied; fulfil that promise; hear me only I intreat, and on your generosity I will endeavour not to intrude.

Angry and agitated, I had risen, but again seated myself, as he appealed to my promise.

He remained once more for some minutes silent, only crossing the room in agitation; then returning to me he proceeded—Before I ever beheld Miss Morven, the tenderness which unsolicited was bestowed on me had awakened my gratitude, and till I saw her, the confession is already made, I believed it my love.—Hear only, I intreat you, madam—(for again I was interrupting him)—your lips can pronounce nothing which your eyes have not already declared—Till I saw Miss Morven, conscious of all merits and all attractions but her own, till I saw her, with all the animation of genius, and all the softness of beauty, pardon me, madam, I believed myself Ruth's lover. Your aunt, in beholding your perfections, beheld also all which passed in my soul: I dreaded her eyes, and trembled at those of Ruth—yours how discerning, yet how blind! I contained myself till the arrival of Mr. Burell, but when in him I thought I beheld the favoured of your heart, I withdrew—In short, I acknowledge it, from that moment I have watched you, and have attended your footsteps. I have ardently desired, and have yet dreaded to speak to you. Undeceived concerning Mr. Burell, whom I had seen quit you, till within this week, I believed you wholly disengaged.—

Judge, my dear brother, what I felt as he uttered these words. My heart, too conscious of its own weakness, caught the alarm; it seemed bounding to my lips—those lips which trembling refused their office, whilst my cheeks throbbed with the deep suffusion they underwent. But I soon recollected myself: I knew that what he had said could be surmise only; but the error which my soul acknowledges, my lips shall never

learn to deny. I arose from my seat; yet, trembling with a thousand passions, was unable to move, but supported myself by the back of the chair, whilst he read in the struggles of my countenance all the emotions which I endured. He found I could not quit him, and again continued—

Forgive, Miss Morven, the assiduity with which I have watched you, and the surmises I have dared to express. It was to-day, that, wrought up to madness by them, in the frenzy of a moment, whilst I trembled at declaring myself to you, I thought of the stratagem which has brought you to my presence; I have executed it, and am miserable.

Can I describe my indignation, when I perceived, that, immediately on my departure from Ruth, he also had quitted her? I thought of the silence which she had kept; I imagined all which she must have suffered; and reproached my heart, which had accused her, perhaps, at the moment in which hers, too sensible and tender, was sinking beneath the disappointment it had experienced. I trembled for the delicate form which inclosed it, and my fancy already beheld her hovering over the grave.—

Trembling and indignant, I cast my eyes on Frank—I repeated her name—“Ruth! dear and unhappy Ruth! I exclaimed; it is I then who am to be your destroyer; and it is to me, thus glowing with the tenderest friendship of woman, that you shall be indebted for misery.”

I urged him to return, to fly to her. He was silent.

You know that energy which, surely, with the last spark of my existence, I shall preserve. I don't know how it is, but lately it seems to overcome me more than ever, and more easily to disorder my frame. I attribute to the varying sensations I had this day undergone, that I then felt myself ill.

The wildness of Frank's first emotions seemed to have subsided; tears fell fast on his cheeks: I again entreated him to think of Ruth, and, hastily moving from the place where I had stood, was leaving him. He seemed unwilling to make an effort to detain me, and I was on the point of quitting him, when the soft and innocent voice of little Sophy broke upon me. She ran into the room, and, flinging herself in his bosom as he knelt, exclaimed, in a voice of joy, that she had found her mamma's Frank, her dear cousin. I expected Ruth to follow her, and I was not disappointed. As she entered the room, my spirits seemed to return, and, reanimated at beholding her, hurried away as I am apt to be, I forgot the strangeness of my situation, and ran with expanded arms to receive her; but as I beheld her, she turned from me with a look of reproach, of disdain, almost of disgust.

At that moment, ah! my dear brother, there are no words which can express to you the pain which I experienced. I had flown to her with pleasure, almost with rapture: my heart was then throbbing with anxious and unbounded tenderness, and it was thus that she met, it was thus that she rewarded it. My spirits seemed at once to fail me; dizziness and confusion obscured my senses. She spoke not; but I answered to the thoughts she had too plainly expressed. Ruth, said I, you are unhappy; but you are mistaken, dear Ruth, you have injured me.—Her sensible soul read mine; she believed me; she pressed me in her arms, and the tears of noble and tender repentance wetted my bosom. Mine flowed with hers, and I was relieved.—It is not you, then, said she, who have deceived me; I will believe that it is not you who have betrayed and have deserted me: but tell me, then, what am I to think? Is it Frank whom I must pronounce the murderer of my peace? Must I look on him as my destroyer?—

As she spoke, I began to recollect myself; I cast my eyes toward Frank; I beheld him overwhelmed, almost insensible. He had not risen; on one knee he rested his face, which he had covered with his hands; but her voice, expressive of what passed in her agitated bosom, roused him as well as me—he lifted up his head. Shall I ever forget the object I then beheld? A cold damp stood on his brows, whilst on his cheeks and lips the last livid hues of death seemed fast spreading. He repeated the words which Ruth had uttered. His voice, low, deep, dread, despairing, it was the voice of resolute horror, the voice of wandering reason. An icy chillness ran through my veins; the terrified infant flung herself on her knees near her mother, and alarmed, she knew not why, fervently began her prayers. Irresolute, uncertain how to act, I stood gazing on each alternately. An instant had not passed thus when I saw his eye glance to the dangerous engine which yet lay on the table. The hint was enough. Swift as thought I darted across the room, and happily secured the pistol, and summoning all my resolution, with one hand, as he wildly seized the other, discharged it. The window being down, it made a violent crash; and the child ran screaming for assistance. Defeated of his intention, Frank flung himself on the floor, whilst Ruth, no longer able to sustain herself, sunk on the spot where I had left her. I returned to support her, and in an instant the people of the house came in. At their entrance Frank started from the floor, and was rushing precipitately from the room, when with a feeble arm I attempted to detain him; but he burst in a moment from me. Wild with apprehension, I addressed a gentleman I saw entering, and eagerly entreated him to detain this ungovernable man. He understood me in a moment, and, with address equal to his strength, flung himself in the door-way, and catching each of Frank's hands led him into an adjoining room, and, having turned the key on him, was at my side in an instant. But judge, if possible, my surprize, when looking in the face of him I was obliged to, I beheld that well-known resemblance of you, my dear brother. I started—I felt even then a lively sensation of pleasure at my heart; the sight of him for a moment suspended every other emotion. His astonishment seemed to equal my own, and an exclamation of surprize, almost in the same breath, burst from each of us. Burrell, who now entered, seemed almost petrified with amazement, and I soon discovered the ties which bind them to each other. With equal anxiety they enquired into my situation; but, every possible emotion throbbing in my breast, I was incapable of giving them any explanation: I could only intreat their assistance for Ruth, and their attention to Frank. The first I had immediately conveyed to the bed, at the side of which I am now watching; Frank was left alone. He recovered from his stupor: all the atonement the past will allow of, he has made; he has sent the following lines to Mrs. Aylesby, by the hands of little Sophy:—

“If yet, injured woman, you can forgive me—hear, Miss Morven—receive my repentance, and I will yet live only for you.”

When she had a little recovered, I read it to her, and she became more composed. The draught which was administered, has since taken effect; a long sleep seems to promise a restoration to her health.

What had passed in the presence of Sophy, had half broken her little heart. I had myself conduced to her sorrow, by neglecting to return her caresses, which, heaven knows, I was not conscious of receiving.

I have gathered from the child's artless story, the reason of Ruth's arrival at Bath, and of her joining Frank and myself at that period so unexpected. Sophy said, that her mamma had received many letters from me: she had often heard her say, Miss Morven

would think her ungrateful, and would then weep, and tell Sophy she was too miserable to write to her, or any body; for her cousin Frank had deserted her, and was gone she knew not whither. She waited expecting his return; but, too much afflicted, at length she determined to come to Bath, where she knew I was, and to lay open her heart in my bosom. According to that resolution, she had come, and had just alighted from the stage, when passing the door of the house I was then in, my Sally saw her, and, knowing how rejoiced I should be to meet with Mrs. Aylesby, entreated her to step in. As they passed along the entry, Sophy caught Frank's voice: she informed her mother of it, and flew to meet him.—Can I then wonder at, or ought I to blame the suspicion, which for a moment sullied the mind of Ruth?—I who have doubted her friendship for that silence which anguish the most piercing has obliged her to keep. I now feel the injustice I have been guilty of, and bitterly do I reproach myself for it.—

My aunt has been with me here, and in as few words as possible I have told the whole to her, and her anger to Frank is great. She entreated me, however, at present, to think of my own health only, and endeavour at repose, and would even have persuaded me to quit the chamber of Ruth; but after all that has passed, fatigued and exhausted as I am, I feel myself too nearly the author of the misfortune of this amiable woman to obey even her: yet I have thought, as she bid me, of my own health; I stretched myself on a couch near Ruth, but was too much agitated to hope for a moment's repose. I rose and have written to you, my brother, till I find my weak and trembling fingers unable any longer to conduct my pen, and the dimness of my eyes increased by the intruding beams of the morning.

LETTER XXXVII.

WHEN I closed my last letter, the excessive weariness which pervaded my whole frame, seemed the forerunner of some approaching and violent sickness; but four and twenty hours since past in tranquillity and rest, have reinstated me.—The gentle and unremitting slumber which Ruth had enjoyed during the night, relieved my heart from much of its anxiety, and, when incapable of remaining longer near her, I reluctantly confided her to other attendance: a long and placid sleep succeeded those tumultuous hours which had disordered me; and I can now explain to you what brought the younger Burell and his brother to my assistance.

Good heaven! when so unexpectedly I beheld the former, and understood the union between him and your friend, a foreboding pang, why should I deny it? wrung this weak and too susceptible heart. I felt, in a moment, all the force of my capricious preference, and all its ingratitude—I felt it even then, when all the terrors of the tenderest friendship were beating with destructive violence through every pulse of my frame.

Burell and his brother, as my aunt tells me, had been with her almost from the moment, when, following her advice, I got into the chariot which had just brought her home. She had said nothing to me of Burell's brother, or his intended introduction, and now speaks of him as just arrived at Bath.—

I am always deceiving myself; but surely she saw my embarrassment, and even seemed, I could have fancied, to partake in it.

What means this air of mystery which surrounds this too attractive young man?— But I will proceed.

By whatever chance it happened, they were, however, with my aunt, when the carriage returned without me. The unusualness of my sending it home, I might have known, had I a moment reflected, would awaken in my aunt that tender and anxious curiosity which proved in reality the consequence of it. The evening drew on: the time, which with me insensibly elapsed, with them passed with all the tediousness of apprehension. I had given no message where to be found, and I returned not: Burell, partaking in her anxiety, and willing to relieve it, with his brother, came in search of me: they arrived at the place where the servants told them I had been set down, at the the moment that the report of the pistol which I fired had gathered a crowd round the house I was in. It attracted their attention also; and the voice of my Sally, who had ran screaming for assistance, reached Burell. There needed no further inducement to him; but making his way through the crowd, he soon found the scene of confusion which plunged himself as well as his brother as well as himself into astonishment. For my own part, affected almost equally by my fears for Ruth, and the emotions of my own heart at their unexpected appearance, by what I gather from my aunt, I must have spoken and acted with strange incoherency. Burell, however, procured the necessary accommodations for Ruth in the house, and that flattering repose which she has since enjoyed, has been succeeded by all the restoration of spirits which can in the present state of her mind and affections be expected.

I was not deceived when I thought her possessed of a feeling and noble soul: I repeat it, she looks on me with that generous partiality which is the offspring only of sensibility and gratitude, and her gentle heart rather regrets than resents the unworthy conduct of her Frank. When I would have expostulated with her for not confiding to me that suspence which has visibly preyed on her, It seems to me, said Ruth, casting up her eyes, which beam with all the softness of her soul—it seems to me, Miss Morven, but a selfish motive by which we are actuated, when we impart our sorrows to those friends who can sympathize in them. We relieve ourselves, but we forget that we are oppressing another. No, let me participate all my pleasures with my friend, but the moments which I pass in misery, them let me learn to bury in my own heart. My silence might injure me in your opinion; but I trusted that the moment would yet come, when you should be undeceived.

Amiable Ruth! I pressed her to my bosom, whilst my heart applauded, and for ever appropriated the sentiment she had uttered. She has yet acknowledged, that, when she unexpectedly found me in an obscure lodging-house, with that air of secrecy which surrounded me, she believed me capable, and thought she beheld me guilty of deceit; but the next moment, with an ingenuous belief worthy of a mind conscious of its own sincerity, she did justice to my feelings and her own: she has even acknowledged, that, at the time she set out for Bath, something like a doubt had arisen in her mind, and urged her to the journey; but in that doubt Frank only was involved; and with that modesty which characterizes and renders her dear to me, she added, I blamed him *then*, even for nothing so much as his cruelty in not writing—I thought it probable and natural, that to continue to love me, he should never have seen Miss Morven.

Such, my brother, is the heart which he has wounded, and such the merits he could slight.—How often are women branded with affectation and insincerity for

rejecting the affection to which their hearts are sensible, and assuming a coldness when they scorn to feel it; yet, when they give way to their native candour, it is thus they must expect to be rewarded.

That heart is ever lightly priz'd,
Which is too lightly won;
And long shall rue the easy maid,
Who yields her love too soon.

Whether the reasons from which this rule arises are right or wrong, I leave it for others to determine: for my own part, I believe they are, and perhaps ought to be, without an exception.

Frank has again written; he has not yet seen this injured woman: he urges an interview, and talks of absenting himself for a twelvemonth, when he may return more worthy of her, and less covered with confusion; at present, he says, with some delicacy, he deserves not to be united to her. I acknowledge I think it a happy and necessary expedient: he is less capable of propriety than I even yet believe him, if he avoids not all recapitulation. I believe I have mentioned to you my aunt's resentment. I could scarcely pacify her, and it was at length with much difficulty that I prevented her from seeing Frank, and expressing the reproaches, which however deserving of, he is at present unfit to hear. Her anger is increased by finding the affair has made a noise in the town. It will occasion, in all likelihood, our quitting Bath. Could I, my brother, quit with it every emotion I have here first experienced, how ardently would I join my wishes to be absented from it for ever!

LETTER XXXVIII.

THIS evening Ruth has accompanied me to my aunt's. Frank has seen and taken leave of her. I was not present, but she has related what passed to me with the frankness which first enchanted me. He has erred, but his soul is not ungenerous. Penetrated, overcome by the condescension with which she listened to him, he wept on the hand she extended to him, and pronounced on it a vow, the most tender and solemn, to render himself by the future worthy of the confidence she was yet willing to repose in him. He talked of shortening the time of his absence some months, and is now travelling to the north of England, where he has some affairs to settle. He is to correspond with Ruth, and leaves to her the time of his return.

It was in vain, as she repeated to me every little circumstance so interesting to her affections, that she endeavoured to conceal her tears, till the sympathizing drops which they produced in the eyes of her little darling made her conquer them. At that moment, how strongly a reflection occurred to me, which I have before a thousand times made, yet never can I cease to wonder at the occasions which give rise to it: I mean that wonderful inattention to children, with which the generality of people are infected. How many parents, how many mothers, even, they who behold the first approaches, how infinitely rapid, of infant reason, yet remain insensible of that curious attention to every transaction

before them which children and almost infants do undoubtedly pay! They see not how soon the feelings are awakened, and that talent of observation implanted in us by heaven is called forth. Even this amiable Ruth, whose life has almost been devoted to her child, hears with surprize those remarks which her emotion and the absence of Frank give rise to. For my part, I am convinced, that, were this power of comprehension, this susceptibility of impression, which pervade them, with regard to every thing more frequently attended to, we should find the years of childhood much abridged, and the character formed at an earlier period than we too generally behold it.

You may wonder, perhaps, at this observation from me, so little as you may think me versed in the œconomy of children; but much of it I had an opportunity of learning, even when excluded from the world, by the method pursued in the education of those children received into the house I was in: and once I knew a secret of importance divulged by its having been related in the presence of a child, who it was supposed would have been incapable of comprehending, and consequently of relating it. This idea has obtruded itself almost irresistibly on my mind; and, perhaps, whilst I communicated it to you, it relieved me a moment from others more interesting and more painful.

LETTER XXXIX.

THESE conflicts, my dear brother, I am not formed to endure: I am even convinced, if frequently I experienced them, they would abridge the hours, perhaps the years of my existence. In saying that my heart owns, that it seems oppressed by the generosity of your Burell, I feel how inadequate is all expression, how cold and inanimate to the sentiments with which he has inspired me—but I will explain myself.

Till this morning I had not seen Burell since our meeting so unexpectedly. My aunt had informed me of his anxiety and tender enquiries; I had even heard the voice, I had marked the footsteps of his brother, under her roof; that voice—why is the sound of it so pleasing to my ear?—Why are the feelings it gives rise to so prevalent in my heart? But, for the present hour, my thoughts ought to be, they shall be sacred to my friend. I will return then to the subject on which I first began.

This morning I quitted my chamber—Ruth yet remains confined to hers—and breakfasting with my aunt in the small room she has appropriated for that purpose, she shewed me a note she yesterday received from Lord S——. It informs her, with many apologies, of his son's having precipitately quitted Bath, and of his intention of following him, by which he was prevented from waiting on my aunt. He accuses his son of caprice and unpoliteness; my aunt joined with him, and, as things appear, not without justice. You know me incapable of affecting a surprize I could not feel. My aunt's chagrin seemed increased by my refusing to join in her anger against this young man.

Ah, noble S——! I feel all the merit of your sacrifice, and hardly can I conceal it from others. Surely I was born to receive and be sensible of the highest obligations, yet to sink under the incapacity of repaying them!

Involuntarily my heart made the apostrophe. I know not to what motive my aunt attributed the sensations which I could not wholly conceal. I had risen early; my aunt generally does; yet breakfast was scarcely removed, when I heard the voice of Burell, and in a minute after he entered. Little did I think on the errand which had that morning awakened him. Could I yesterday have seen a few hours beyond that in which Frank took leave of Mrs. Aylesby, what a night had I passed!

Unhappy Frank! I have not told you, that, before his departure, he sought my aunt, and left in her hands a few lines to me: they are such as became him to write, and such as did not pain me to receive.

My aunt was as much surprized as myself at this early visit of Burell's: for my part, I knew not what to think of it. I looked when other steps should follow his: the idea filled my mind, and rendered me confused, agitated, and inconsistent. With a look of deep concern, Burell enquired after my health; a look which seemed to say he beheld and felt for its decline. I recovered myself, and received him with that friendship which my heart experiences; which, whilst any of its powers shall remain, it must experience for him.

Breakfast was recalled; he spoke little; but there was too much expression in his eyes for the peace of your Theresa. I endeavoured for spirits which once were said never to fail me, whilst with difficulty those tears were restrained which the concern written in his countenance gave rise to. With an absent air he drank one dish of tea only, and then rose and crossed the room two or three times without speaking, took up a book which lay on the table, opened it, turned over several pages, and then flung it down. My aunt, as

well as myself, saw in him an agitation for which she was incapable of accounting. We both looked earnestly at him; and Burell, recollecting himself, in a low voice addressed her — I have many pardons, madam, to ask of you, said he, for the strangeness of my behaviour; forgive me that I have no better command of myself. Shall I trespass too much on your goodness, and on that of Miss Morven, when I entreat, as a friend only, half an hour's conversation with her alone?—The granting of your request, said my aunt, lies only with Theresa. I can only say, that, when again you ask any thing relating to her, till you can better conceal the confusion of your thoughts, you must be contented if there is but one person in the world deceived by your requiring it as a friend only.—Alas! madam, said Burell, as he conducted my aunt, who had risen to quit us, to the door of the apartment, would to heaven that I could deceive even myself!

Surprized at Burell's request, uncertain as to its intent, and doubting whether I ought to grant it, I had risen. As he returned, I would have spoken, but he interrupted me.—Theresa, said he, it was in this room—I behold it with pleasure—you first allowed me to call you by the name of friend; I would speak to you as such. My heart is full even to agony: suffer me, at least, to pour out its sorrows in your bosom, Theresa. It is pressed with doubt: when the suspence is past, I know I shall better command myself; at least I shall be incapable of distressing you.

He led me to a seat, and took his own near me, and we remained silent, till, hoping a little to relieve his inquietude, I addressed him.—I know, said I, how incapable you are of wishing to distress me; yet, my friend, you do distress me, and, even at this minute, the words which you cannot utter without faltering, seem to pierce me, and, believe me, they have wounded my heart. For my peace, Burell, abate a little of that tenderness for me, which in destroying your happiness, must necessarily diminish mine.

He once more rose, crossed the room, and, for some minutes, resting his forehead and eyes on his arm, which he leant against the sash, seemed incapable of speaking. At length, Miss Morven, I am weaker than I believed myself, said he, as he approached me: it was in this room, suffer me to repeat it, that you permitted me the title of your friend; and this is the spot where so generously you promised me your confidence also on the most important event of your life. You will forgive all the emotion of your friend, when I tell you that it is to claim the performance of that promise I have now intruded on you.

Ah! my dear brother, that flash of electrical fire, which, falling from heaven, in a moment can put a period to existence, pervades not with more rapidity and violence the frame which it destroys, than this explanation of Burell's, equally sudden and unexpected, did mine. I saw the cruelty of an answer from me, and dreaded to be candid; yet my heart, which revolts at dissimulation, seemed to hover on my lips. Again I thought of my injustice and caprice, and, incapable of utterance, I would have risen; but the attempt served only the more to discover my confusion, and trembling I resumed my seat. I felt the force of my own silence, and endeavoured at articulation. I looked up at Burell, who, with his arms folded, stood earnestly marking my countenance; and there, in the tumults I endured, read the certainty of my affections belonging to another. Alas! when I beheld his, how bitterly did I reproach myself! The tears of a manly and sensible soul, how infinitely affecting! I saw the large drops trickle down his cheeks; I saw him scarce able to support himself, and my powers returned. I started up, and stretched out my hand to him: he flung himself on a seat, and his pale cheek rested on my shoulder: he took the hand, which hung almost lifeless beside me, in both his—Be not concerned for me,

Theresa; it is past: but we must expect a pang at the departure of the last ray of hope, as well as the last pulse of existence.—Theresa, you pity me; but be comforted; my brother doats on you to distraction, and, believe me, he is deserving of you. I will quit you both, and you shall be happy.—

Surprize for a moment overcame me; but viewing him with admiration, at length, Burell, said I, catching his hand, and pressing it to my heart, it is impossible; I should then follow the impulse of passion only, and your esteem for me must be forfeited. Undeserving as I have proved myself of that exalted affection you bestow on me, trust to my regard, my admiration; it will in time make me worthy of you. Trust to that, Burell; accept of my hand in the presence of heaven, of my vows at his everlasting altar, and I will be yours.

He rose with impetuosity, and caught me sinking in his arms. My heart, which a moment before seemed bursting, was relieved by tears; and I poured them without a blush on his generous bosom. I began a little to recover myself, and he remained still silent; but I felt myself infinitely disordered—my mind seemed in I know not what confusion—I would have given the world to retire, but I was incapable of even uttering the wish which I formed to do so. Tears again relieved me: I sunk into a chair, and Burell threw himself at my feet. He took both my cold and trembling hands in his. Compose yourself, lovely woman! Think not of me, Theresa: the struggle is past. Think of that delicate frame which this energy destroys. There are no words which can express my feelings at this moment; but your angelic soul is formed to conceive them: you can feel the motives on which I can refuse this noble sacrifice. Yes, Theresa, I do refuse it. The struggle, I repeat, is over; the moment of danger is past. If at first I yielded to the transport which it inspired, I will flatter myself it was not for human weakness to resist. But you will not now reject my vows, vows of everlasting attachment, of friendship, which life only can dissolve, and which no other woman can ever participate—

He spoke with an agitation which increased my distress: he saw it, and quitting my hands, rose and left me with precipitation. I felt myself relieved, and indulged with more freedom my tears. In a short time, however, he returned, and my aunt with him. I drank a glass of water and some drops, and my spirits revived; but the sight of Burell pained me. I rose to retire. Forgive me, Miss Morven, said he, if in the presence of your aunt I detain you a few minutes longer. Hurried away by other passions, I have as yet not even mentioned what brought me here thus early and unceremoniously. Much as my curiosity was excited, there seemed, at that moment, nothing in the world sufficiently interesting to engage my stay. Almost unable to make an apology, I was going, when I thought of you, my dear brother, of your expected arrival, and resumed my seat.

For what I have to say, said Burell, turning to my aunt, I have your excuse, madam, or at least Miss Morven's, to ask. You must forgive me, if, as a friend, I have interested myself in her injuries; I have thought it incumbent on me to revenge them—

What is it you mean? interrupted my aunt. Surely you have not followed and thought of revenging yourself on Frank!

Too much affected before, what Burell had said had made little impression on me, till my aunt's exclamation roused me. Those murderers, who are suffered to exist undishonoured in society, under the name of duellists, have ever inspired me with horror. I looked at him, whilst that chilling sensation took possession of my heart, and spread itself over my languid countenance. He saw it, and hastily said, Do not terrify yourself:

my hands, Theresa, are not defiled with blood: the existence of Frank is not in danger; he is safe, and you behold me also unhurt.

My heart was lightened of the load with which his former words had oppressed it. Ever, said I eagerly, ever, Burell, may they be free from it! Tremble, my dear friend, with me at that just, that dreadful sentence which pronounces, "Whoso sheddeth the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." Forget not the terrors with which it will one day present itself to the minds of the guilty. For me it is that you have incurred this: alas! Burell, what more is it on your account that I must have to reproach myself?

My aunt blamed my earnestness, and I had scarce finished speaking, before I felt myself its impropriety, and perhaps its cruelty to Burell. You feel every thing so forcibly, said my aunt, you do not see how you thus distress all to whom you are most dear. You know her method of expression, Mr. Burell, too well to think much of it. I intreat you, for heaven's sake, to satisfy my impatience.

You had never, said Burell, heard this from me, but for an accident which has rendered it public, and which made me fear lest it might reach you with exaggerations by some other channel. I have erred with the rest of the world, and, from the moment the whole of Mr. Hyde's behaviour was known to me, I determined to call him to some future account in the way which that world sees without abhorrence. I was misinformed of the time of his departure, or the hour in which he took leave of Mrs. Aylesby had been the last of his safety. I heard not of it till late yesterday evening. I then followed, traced him, and put up at the same inn. I did not go to rest, but waited with impatience till day should appear, which it no sooner did, than I knocked at his chamber door, for which I had purposely enquired. He was risen, and, on opening it, saw me not without astonishment. A few minutes was sufficient for my explanation. I was not very cool, but requested him to follow me. He seemed to hesitate a little, but at last turned resolutely to me, and said, I think, Mr. Burell, you are the friend of Miss Morven's brother; you, perhaps, I may therefore allow to have some right to the satisfaction you think proper to demand; but I was never more surprized, and never less prepared, than this morning for such a call. I heard this speech not without contempt. We loaded our pistols, and sallied out. It was the first, and, I think, Miss Morven, it shall be the last attempt of my life of this kind. We went to a bowling-green behind the house. He insisted on my firing first. The ball of my pistol tore a piece from his coat, but he was not hurt. I then stood to receive his fire, but he flung his pistol on the ground and came up to me—Good God! I yet feel my astonishment, as I recollect his action and his expressions—I have no malice to you, Mr. Burell, he said: your resentment is just, and you see no coward at your side. I have fought in this cause before, and, I am sorry to say it, yesterday evening, on this very spot. I wounded my man——

Both my aunt and I interrupted Burell with repeating his words—fought in this cause before, and had wounded his man!—I thought I should have sunk from my chair. My aunt gave me another large glass of water, and entreated Burell to proceed—

Ah! Miss Morven, said he, I should first have confided to your aunt; I should have left to her the unfolding it to you: upon me it is a task how very severe! But be not alarmed, I intreat you; be assured there is no life in danger.

Burell then continued: I was struck said he, with this address, and the information which it conveyed. It was in vain that I urged him to take his stand against me; he insisted only on my going in with him, and said he would then explain the whole to me. The affair

could not have been long over when I had arrived at the inn, but I had shut myself from all society.—

Burell now again stopped, visibly struggling for composure. My aunt intreated him to proceed.

Be assured, I conjure you, he continued, that no one is materially injured.

Oh! my brother, I saw it was me for whom he feared, and for whom only he felt; yet I then knew not all my obligations to him: but I will continue in his words.

I followed Frank in; he shut the door of his apartment as we entered, and then related to me all that had before happened. He had yesterday evening travelled but a few miles, when a gentleman rode up, accosted and accompanied him to this house. No sooner had they alighted, than he insisted on seeing him (Frank) alone. It was then the impetuous young man informed him of the intention with which he had joined him, and, warm as I know him to be, he used, I am persuaded, to Frank language unusually severe. He produced the pistols which he had provided, and they soon found out this spot.—It was Frank's chance to fire first; his ball struck on the breast of his antagonist: he rose, however, instantly, and discharged his piece; happily it failed, and the pistols having been heard in the house, the people, who now interposed, sent for a surgeon and conveyed the young man to bed. With some pain the ball was extracted, and all is safe; a slight wound only remains.

I could retain my impatience no longer, and interrupted Burell—But this antagonist, this avenger of my wrongs, who is he, Burell? Tell me from what motive—

Motive! repeated Burell, as he fixed his eyes on me: the man who has once seen Miss Morven, who in that once had an opportunity of beholding and forming an idea of her perfections, can he want a motive? Think then of such a man, and that ardent and ungovernable being will be presented before you.

As he said this, what he had before uttered, joined to his own emotion, rushed with equal conviction upon my mind. Then it was that I feared, that I hoped, I wished, and yet dreaded to hear this name: then it was that my mind foreboded that it was his brother: I then ventured to flatter myself that the interest which from the first instant I had taken in him, was not unreturned. The pleasing imagination glided with the rapidity of light through my fancy, it seemed to recal my powers. Surely, said I, with impetuosity, it cannot be—it is not—I felt my error, and checked myself—I beheld Burell's countenance, and the glow which in a moment had seemed to reanimate me, the blush of expectation and of pleasure, almost of rapture, faded from my cheek. In a low voice he satisfied my doubts; he told my aunt it *was* his brother—that he had seen him, and there was nothing to apprehend. The surgeon had been sent for from Bath, none of eminence being nearer, and the whole town is acquainted with the affair, with numberless added inconsistencies.

Burell was incapable of further explanation; it was with visible pain he had gone thus far. He hastily took his leave, and was returning, he said, to attend on his brother. My aunt intreated, and he promised to see her again soon.—I was happy to escape from the importunate enquiries and surmises of that too tender woman.—I have not since sought any society. In tears and prayers for the peace of Burell, I will own it, for the safety of his brother, I have poured forth my soul to heaven, and I have opened it to you. How slowly approaches the time when I shall again converse with you! and till that period arrives, why is it that

“Fancy augments the dangers of the deep,
“And expectation loads the wing of time”?”

The ardor with which I wish for your arrival, is equal to the affection which I have ever felt, which, still mingling with all other attachments, I ever must feel, in all its strength, for you, my beloved brother.

I am surprized at the length of my last letters, and you perhaps may never receive them, or, should they reach your hands, they may but little interest you.—But no, I will not believe it. The narrative of those sentiments and emotions which arise in the heart—and, conscious of it as I am, why should I not say it?—the sensible heart of your sister, you are incapable of perusing with indifference; you will take part in every sensation of her soul, and, if you cannot be blind to its errors, you will, at least, behold them with the unrepublishing pity of sympathy, and the tender partiality of affection.

LETTER XL.

TWO days have passed, and I have not seen Burell; yet twice every day has he sent to my aunt an account of his brother’s health: he has continued to mend, and now quits his apartment.

Why, my dear brother, is it, that, when I think on the rash action of this young man, I behold it with horror and detestation; yet, as the remembrance of it arises, I am not less partial to him—I am not less willing to imagine him possessed of all the virtues which my fancy has bestowed on him? Alas! my heart but too willingly excuses that warmth and impetuosity which it participates! I forget his crime, and behold him only wounded and bleeding for me, to whom he owes nothing, and of whose involuntary regard he is even unconscious. A thousand times have I recalled the words of his brother, He loves you to distraction; he is deserving of you.

Generous Burell! I know what in these words he meant to convey. I admire in him this testimony to the merits of his rival; I feel a new and uncommon sensation in the certainty with which this expression should inspire me. Our hearts have beat in secret, but they have also beat in unison. I dwell on the idea, it seems to revive and reanimate me; yet I am not easy. Burell has discovered the dearest secret of my soul: I have myself acknowledged it to him. Perhaps, at the moment of first seeing Vincent with him, I was betrayed by the emotion I was then unable to conceal, as well as by that which succeeded, when he called for my confidence, and, overcome by that, all precaution was forgotten. As I recollect the avowal I myself made, I now tremble, lest, in seeking to render me happy, Burell should betray that secret to his brother. This reflection troubles me; yet, notwithstanding, I feel myself more easy, more chearful, more alive, than I have long been. My dear aunt, to whose affection and tenderness I owe so much, sees it and rejoices.

Ruth is charmingly recovered. I broke, in the most gentle manner, the whole to her. It is well over, and she knows my whole heart, and would chace from thence all

doubt and uneasiness. She is anxious to see Vincent, and bids me look forward and be happy.

LETTER XLI.

I HAVE received a note from Burell. Fortunately I was alone at the moment of its arrival. A thousand times I have perused and pressed it to my heart, which beats with violence against its folds. I perceive and I blush at my own folly. To-morrow Vincent comes to ask and obtain my pardon for his rashness.

Ah! generous Burell, noble and delicate lover, you know my heart, yet can resolve to bring this intruder, this stranger, with whose power you are not unacquainted—Oh! lover deserving of that name, since it is my happiness alone that you wish. When I think of you, I shrink from my own littleness; I contemplate your actions with sensations which are only to be felt, and shed over them the truest tears of admiration.

LETTER XLII.

THE departure of the last star of the night, the bright rays of the morning, how welcome are they to my eyes! In this night which precedes a meeting so dear, so interesting, it was in vain that I courted repose. I have arisen; my window faces the east, and I have watched “the grey dawn and the pleiades” in their progress. When I fixed my eyes on the majestic concave which overshadows me, even those sensations, which had so agitated me, disappeared; thanksgiving and reverence filled my heart.

Lives there, my brother, that blind and insensible being, who, beholding these miraculous works of Omniscience, could doubt their originating from divinity, their proceeding from the hands of an eternal and almighty Creator? Can such dreadful and impious absurdity enter the mind of the lords of this world, my dear brother? I never did, never can I believe it. There exists not, in the breast of man, that heart so cold, so dead, so irrational. It is not in nature to give birth to this living, yet impenetrable rock. Surely, in me, my brother, not to behold this morning rise, had been even a sin. Never may I forget to pour forth, at the footstool of mercy everlasting, of beneficence eternal, my prayers of gratitude! It is now three years only, since on this morning I awakened to the pure light of uncontaminated religion, and was released from the gloomy and impenetrable walls of superstition: then it was that I sunk at the feet of you, my brother, my friend, my deliverer! Nature and genius had ever been dear to me: from that moment I was permitted to behold them, I received their divine influence into my soul; I pursued the flowery and delightful paths of science, paths from which I had feared to be for ever excluded. To heaven and to you it is that I owe this sacred and rapturous reflection, and never shall this morning escape me without my remembering and acknowledging it.

LETTER XLIII.

I HAVE begun another sheet; for I would not mingle ideas less sacred with those with which my bosom this morning overflowed. My hands, as they have ever on this day, have decked a little fantastical shrine, surrounded with every object which may heighten, if possible, those tender and grateful emotions with which I ever reflect on you. Your dear and faithful resemblance is placed in the midst. What is it I do not feel as I contemplate it?

Ruth has seen this little arrangement, and has attributed it to another cause; but, my brother, I can say, even at that moment, when hope and expectation beat high in my heart, this tribute is sincere, and is only yours: yet, I own it, my fingers at this minute, trembling, almost refuse their office; and this form, which has been flattered by your praises, is, to acknowledge my vanity, decorated as becomingly as possible. Ah! my brother, on this day, this hour perhaps, depends the whole happiness of my life. My agitation increases, and till I have seen him, I can write no more.

LETTER XLIV.

THIS day, the first and fairest of my existence, is past; the tumult of my spirits is subsided. What, my brother, are the flights of imagination to the feelings of the heart? I doubt no longer—my happiness is compleat—I have been introduced to Vincent—I beheld him elegant and animated, his eyes fixed only on your Theresa. When I entered the room, and my aunt introduced him to me with the words, how little necessary! My dear Theresa, when I present this gentleman to you as Mr. Vincent Burell, you will know all the thanks which are due from us to him, trembling and hesitating, I was at a loss for expression, and, for the first time in my life, wished to testify gratitude inferior to that which I really felt—I was, for the first time, on my guard against that warmth of expression which has so often been blamed in me, but which I have not yet learnt to lament. Something, however, covered with a deep blush, I uttered. The confusion which glowed in his own fine features assisted to dispel mine. I have been informed, said he, of Miss Morven's sentiments: they are those of humanity and of justice—but I have had the misfortune to act contrary to them; and I have now only to hope the transaction will be buried in oblivion, which she already has taught me to regret. My aunt said all which politeness required, whilst I insensibly recovered myself; and two hours, the shortest surely of my life, were elapsed, before Vincent rose to take his leave. My aunt was not sparing of her compliments to him, and he answered them by addressing himself to me. He touched the keys of the instrument as he passed—It was not yet dinner-time, and my aunt, who loves to display the little perfections of her niece, bid me sit down to it. His soul is surely formed for music: the sound seemed to enter it, and, as he looked on me, every idea seemed lost in attention.—As I finished, I caught the gratifying words which passed from his lips, and spoke in the beams of his sparkling eyes. He looked at his watch—An hour, an instant! said he, as he rose to take his leave. My heart sunk as the door shut after him. I flung myself on my aunt's bosom, and to her owned every past and every present emotion of my soul. I had then the satisfaction of doing justice to the whole

conduct of S——. She heard me with affection and indulgence. Half my story was already known to her. She had learnt from his brother that I had met young Burell, that he was attached to me. That generous man had already smoothed the path of happiness for me; yet, selfish as I am, I have neglected to write of him. I have not yet told you, that, before I went to make my acknowledgements to Vincent, I had parted with him. I was just entering the room as Burell met me; and, leading me aside, accosted me: Charming emotion, beautiful angel, he said, as I gave him my hand, into which he put a little packet; and then said, If you would see me tolerably composed, speak not; I have done all that friendship requires. I thought to have staid, but I find myself incapable of it: I am now going to Italy; I will not stay even to see your brother. Theresa, remember me to him. Vincent, I repeat, adores you; but I have kept your secret—you are worthy of each other. Be his, be happy. As for me——time perhaps——But I move you—Adieu, dear woman! think of me sometimes.

He hastily kissed the tear that had fallen on my cheek; he caught each of my hands, cast his eyes up, and pressed them to his heart.

Theresa, said he, may God restore to you your health! Live, beloved woman, for my brother, for your Vincent.

He let my hands fall, and hurried out of the apartment. I attempted to speak; he heard my voice, and stopping for a moment a sigh reached him too deep to be stifled, and was gone. I then saw Vincent, and even this scene disappeared from my mind.—

I have perused the packet which Burell left with me; it explains the cause of Vincent's retirement. My aunt tells me you know the whole scheme. Ah, my brother, it is now no time to be angry. It contains also a letter, how dear and invaluable! from Vincent. In that letter I find a description of your Theresa, but so flattering a one, that only the first sensations of love could have prompted it.

In two days we quit Bath; we set forward on an excursion toward the sea, from whence we may now so soon hope to receive you, and I have persuaded Ruth to accompany us with her Sophy.

Adieu, my dear brother. Sleep presses heavy on my eye-lids, which have closed very little for some nights past.—Adieu.

Did I tell you Vincent was here again in the evening, and that my aunt is already attached to him? Or that she will not allow him to be like you? If I did, you will excuse the repetition of what is so near my heart, and you will yet believe me that affectionate sister of which you are more than deserving.—Adieu.

LETTER XLV.

SEVERAL days have passed, during which I have not written a word. My aunt has been somewhat indisposed, but I do not offer that as my excuse: the truth is, since Vincent has been permitted to come abroad, he has been here incessantly.—Oh, he is every thing that can justify the warmest partiality of an enthusiastic heart, and I find no difficulty before me but that of concealing a passion too ardent perhaps to be properly understood by any thing bearing the name of man.

We should have before this quitted Bath, had my aunt's health permitted; and I should then have missed an unexpected visit this morning, received from a character which interests and afflicts me.

Vincent was reading a new publication to my aunt and me, *The Progress of Fashion*. The title is light, but the work is solid; and there is a strength in the whole of it that strikes me. The author by some, I know, is accused of displaying his learning; to me he seems only to be possessed of, and to make use of it. When we meet I will point out some passages that pleased me. Twice did Vincent lay down the book, and anticipate the remark which was just risen to my lips. It is true, we are formed for each other.—

But I forget this visitor who interrupted us. You may remember, perhaps, Mr. Manville, the curate whom I heard during my stay at Ruth's. It was he—his child, whose sickness is now almost beyond hope, has been sent here, as the last resource, to try the bath. He introduced himself with some flattering expressions to me, but I have learnt how to estimate them. The error of his character has shocked me; but I could not behold him without reverence. He talked of the desperate state of his beloved son with the expressions of meek and patient piety, worthy of a minister of the Gospel of Christ; but turn to another subject, and this divine part of his character disappears—Ruth was not present at his entrance, but he knew her to be with us, and his insatiable curiosity formed a thousand surmises concerning the cause of her quitting———. I gave into none of them. At length, he said, she appeared to him a simple, inoffensive being—and it was cruel of Miss Morven to rob her of the only lover she had ever gained. This was coming too near the point. I was hurt, and said, with some indignation, You are yet, sir, mistaken, if you believe Mr. Hyde not to be devoted at present to Mrs. Aylesby. He seemed chagrined; but Ruth then entering, he rose to congratulate her on her amended looks; and setting Sophy to point out the keys on the organ to him, Mrs. Aylesby, he said, turning to my aunt, has recovered that spirit and vivacity which used to distinguish her—whilst the very bow which accompanied this compliment had irony in it. The sense which he possesses seems really to blind him, or he could not imagine that any one would see him contradict the sentiments he had expressed but an instant before, without discovering the hypocrisy of which he is thus for ever guilty, and internally despising him for it. He seems to feel the superiority of his own understanding so much, that he leaves any the least glimmerings of it in those who converse with him out of his account, and thus exposes himself most at the moment in which he levels his ridicule at others.—He entered into conversation with Vincent, and discovered learning equal to the talents I have before admired in him: he seemed, I thought, as if fathoming those of Vincent, and evinced more spleen than satisfaction, when assured they were not wanting.

When he rose to take his leave, he clasped my hand with the affection of a father, and, as I expressed my wishes for the recovery of his child, the tears of parental anxiety glistened in his eyes, and whilst the fire of true devotion seemed to kindle there, with the sanctity of a divine, he said, My good child, when you are old like me, you will know that the ways of God are inscrutable as just; but we must remember that to submit to his will with resignation is the only way man has of proving his belief in his word.

Ah! my dear brother, was this man always what at that minute he appeared, he might alone reform the world; meek, pious, humble, beneficent, with talents to engage the affections, with manners to secure them; yet, blind and unhappy as he is, capable of rendering himself beloved, almost adored by all who knew him, he neglects those

enviable advantages. He is heard and admired; but he is known, and must be despised. I beheld him with pity, and wept over that littleness of soul, that mean, unworthy duplicity which disgraces a character so capable of being all that is noble in nature, all that is respectable in religion.

His character struck Vincent, and he understood the drops I could not refrain shedding when he quitted us. My dear Ruth is more tranquil: she does not admire him like me, and she sees the errors I lament in him with detestation more than equal to her pity. There is, I remember, a sentiment in an author of very high repute, which comes home to this prevailing foible of his; and, though I do not wholly agree with it, I yet find it too applicable for me to forbear quoting it—"Those snarling, and satirical tempers, says he, every cut of whose tongue is like the stab of a poniard, find the unworthy abuse they make of talents, so estimable when rightly applied, goes not unpunished: as they spare none, so none spare them; and, were they at the highest top of exaltation, the lowest mortal upon earth would think he had a right to fall upon them, and to rob them of the good qualities they otherwise have."

LETTER XLVI.

TO-MORROW we leave this place, where I arrived with wishes so fantastical, and hopes so ill founded, even the idea which then so fully possessed every faculty of my mind has passed away like a shadow: I am to believe it an illusion of my fancy only; I am to suppose that work which so much enchanted me, to be the production of this Dr. Goethé. To speak the truth, my dear brother, my heart and imagination are at present so much otherwise engaged, I scarce care whose it is; but I must ever remember how near I was owing to it my introduction to Vincent Burell.

I have been with my aunt to take leave of Dr. C——. He says that my health is perhaps mending, but that I yet think myself much better than I am. He complimented me on the recovery of my spirits: he knew the occasion of my coming to Bath, and has heard something also of the deception Frank had put on me, and in delicacy avoided his usual topic Werter—I saw it, and, Fear not, my good sir, said I, this Werteromania is cured, and I could now almost hear you doubt of his excellence with patience. — The object of your admiration, said Dr. C——, rather archly, is perhaps less visionary at present, and something more easy to be pointed out and procured.—I gave him no answer, if my confusion was not a sufficient one.

His daughter is married; I paid her my compliments, and we then quitted them, and went round a little circle of acquaintances my aunt had here renewed and contracted.

On our arrival at home we found Vincent; he was putting the last strokes to a drawing of mine. But I see that when I am with him he does nothing—could I wish him to do any thing but attend to me?

This is the last time I shall write to you. Shall I confess the truth? I see I shall have no time to spare to my pen; but, my heart beating with the fondest affection, I am now hastening to meet you—to clasp my beloved brother—to present to him the permitted object of my affections—to taste, in their mutual conversations and endearments, all that

the world can bestow—that elegant and durable felicity which is the offspring only of true sensibility of soul, of delicacy and refinement.

THERESA MORVEN.

The following narrative, which connects those letters which have preceded with those which conclude this volume, was gathered from the lips of Mrs. Aylesby, whose memory retained every transaction with the minuteness arising from the fixed and tender attachment to her friend Theresa Morven.

MISS MORVEN, with her aunt, her friend Ruth, and her lover, sat out to anticipate her meeting with her brother, full of those hopes which her sanguine disposition was so apt to give way to. To these friends, however, her precarious state of health was but too visible. The warmth and ardor of her heart supported her spirits, but her strength visibly decayed, her form wasted, and the bloom of youth and beauty faded from her cheek. But the expectation of her every wish being gratified by the return of her brother, and the unbounded affection of Vincent, (whose passion was as ardent as it was sudden,) gave hopes to her aunt, that, at a period when all the powers of nature are in their full force, she would recover the shock her constitution had sustained. It was an additional pang to her that it had been incurred by her dutiful attention. In that sickness, which Theresa mentions in the former part of her letters, this affectionate niece had watched, without rest or remission, for fifteen days and nights, at the bed of her aunt; and it was after being thus exhausted, that the malignancy had entered her blood, and attacked with violence a frame as remarkably delicate as beautiful in its construction. By the art of a skilful physician she escaped present death; but from that period, to the fond eyes of her aunt, her dissolution had seemed insensibly approaching. It is well known that great tenderness will make us fear, as well as hope, too much for its object; and Ruth, who had not seen Theresa in her full bloom, was willing to believe this only was the present case.

They travelled by easy stages to Portsmouth; and even Mrs. Carlton saw a visible amendment in her niece. Here in impatient expectation they remained some days;—at length the hour so ardently expected by Theresa arrived. During the night a sloop from Gibraltar had entered the harbour; many soldiers were conveyed in it. The inhabitants of the town, warmed by that admiration of valour which the soul involuntarily owns, ran eagerly out to bind on the brows of their gallant defenders those laurel wreaths which they prepared as the reward of their virtue. Then from many a veteran, who had beheld unmoved the threats of approaching famine, and the more certain peril of the sword, dropped the noble tears of a brave and manly heart; and those souls, so undaunted in danger, now melted at this glorious testimony bestowed by the hands of their country—this most flattering memorial of fame which a soldier could ever receive. It is impossible to pass over this real and moving transaction, without quoting the glowing lines of the gallant Ercilla, on a subject so nearly similar, and which may with truth be applied, when the great expectations which were formed from the success of the enemies floating batteries is remembered.

“These, by their efforts in the dread debate,
“Forced the determined will of adverse fate,

“From shouting triumph rushed the palm to tear,
“And fixed it on the brow of faint Despair.”

Theresa was just risen when their arrival and entrance was announced. Her servant enquired of one of them if Major Morven was in the vessel which brought them: he was answered in the affirmative. Theresa, in all whose emotions the truest devotion was ever mingled, threw herself in an extasy on her knees to heaven for his safe arrival. Ah! my brother, she exclaimed, the moment with which I have so long flattered myself is at length arrived; my hands shall fix on your temples the laurel you have won, and you shall at once receive the invaluable meed of fame and of affection.

Her brother had not yet quitted the ship, and her aunt yielded to her eager desire of meeting him. Theresa, the tears streaming from her fine eyes, flew to the key. Lost in observing her, without a hat Vincent accompanied her whilst her aunt and Ruth walked with less agitation behind. She saw the ship drawn close up to the shore, every one crowding round it. She was incapable of making any enquiry, but thought she perceived her brother detained from her on the deck. She sprung forward. A band of music had been playing to welcome the remaining passengers: it stopped on a sudden—a sick officer, borne by several soldiers, was conveying on shore, extended on a litter, pale, emaciated, and heedless even of the voice of fame. Theresa cast a pitying eye on him—she started—her whole frame was convulsed; she beheld in him that brother so ardently expected, so dearly beloved: she gave a faint scream—

“From her slack hand the garland she had wreath’d
“Down dropt—and all its faded honours shed:
“Speechless she stood and pale!”—

Conviction struck on her mind, and she fell senseless at the feet of those who supported him. Vincent shuddered as he comprehended the whole, and, catching her in his arms, ordered the supporters of the major to follow him. The faint voice of his sister had reached his ears; he attempted to rise, and saw her, like a corpse, conveying before him, and again with a deep groan concealed his head in the pillow.

Almost sinking beneath the shock, her aunt and Mrs. Aylesby joined the mournful procession. They arrived at their inn, and young Morven was laid on a bed, and assistance being sent for, Theresa soon recovered. Deaf to the entreaties of Vincent, she flew to her brother: at the sound of her voice, he made an effort, and, advancing a few steps, extended his arms to receive her. She flung her own round him, and, in a voice smothered with sobs, uttered, My brother! my beloved brother! and they sunk together. Burrell flew to support them. My dear Theresa, in a low voice, said the major, fear nothing; think, my sister, of yourself, and I shall recover; I am already better.—Better! alas! my brother, the hand of death is already on you. You are gone, you have forgotten your Theresa! I feel it plainly; my heart is already bursting. Oh! my brother—

As she said this, she again fainted: her wandering words had flung the major into a dangerous agony: in this interval of total insensibility, Theresa was removed from him. Other assistance was called in; they were kept for some hours from each other—she revived, and the major was free from any immediate danger.—

In this interval it was thought adviseable to flatter Theresa into a belief that her brother was likely to recover; and unfortunately, in thus giving way to the present, they forgot to provide against the future: she was assured that every physician who had seen him had ascertained his safety. What she so earnestly wished, she learned to hope, and what she thought with reason she hoped, she at length believed.—

They saw one another again with less emotion; but remained together a few minutes only, since the major could not longer have sustained the exertions which in her presence gave him an appearance of amendment wholly foreign to what he felt. His health depended, he said, on her repose, and she was thus persuaded to quit him.

A draught was administered in her drink which might incline her to sleep. The major passed a tolerable night, and in the morning, making the following short recital to Vincent, divulged a secret which he had before carefully preserved from his sister, and to which his friend Burell hints in the two letters of his which appear. This was no other than his having received a dangerous wound at the moment of assisting the gallant Curtis in the protection of his enemies. From this wound he was but just recovering, when he received that letter from his aunt, so alarming to an affectionate heart. He knew his sister, and delay, he thought, might be dangerous, as well as cruel. He opened his heart to a lady to whom he was then engaged. She joined in persuading him to set off instantly, and promised to wait for or soon follow him.

At this period he again became sensible of the attacks of a nervous fever, but he was silent concerning it; and the lady naturally enough attributed his lowness of spirits to his quitting her.—On the night previous to his departure, he sat up with her, and the wind rising suddenly in the morning, the captain of the vessel which was to convey him, without waiting for the major, availed himself of it—the vessel sailed without him. When the major discovered this, he took a hasty leave of the woman he loved, and ventured in an open boat, in which, before he could overtake the sloop, he was tossed about for an hour in a rough sea, and exposed to a deluge of rain, which fell during the whole time. His health before ill established, the consequence was obvious: he was some days in a high delirium; there was no regular physician on board, and he was therefore improperly treated. The fever ceased at length, but its consequence remained; and when he arrived in England he was believed to be past the reach of all art.

This declaration was a dreadful stroke to his friends and those of Theresa; they foresaw and dreaded the effects it would have on her. For three days, however, they continued to deceive her; Vincent alone, who never quitted her side, had strength of mind sufficient to give her a hint of her brother's danger—but she had at first been flattered by them, and she had now learned to flatter herself. On the morning of the fourth, it was but too evident the whole must be soon known to her: the major's last hour was visibly approaching; a thousand sensations assured him of its certainty. Never, in the presence of Theresa, had one complaint escaped him; she had hoped, she believed, she even expected his recovery. He had felt a thousand tortures for the amiable woman he had left behind, but anxiety for Theresa now occupied every emotion of his heart: he saw her present before him; he beheld in her eyes, in the earnestness of that attention which she paid to him, how nearly her being was connected with his own. No other affection had weakened that she had ever so ardently acknowledged for him. At the approaching moment of his dissolution, he represented to himself all the agonies she would undergo, and thought only of relieving them. He fixed his eyes earnestly upon her, and, taking a silent and

inward farewell of this tender and beloved sister of his soul, concealed the dreadful struggles which the resolution he at that moment fixed on cost him—that struggle of all the affections, which, lingering to the last round the yet sensible hearts of the children of mortality, oblige them to regret that world which has so frequently wounded them.

Sensible of his approaching end, he found a moment to advise to Vincent the administering of an opiate to Theresa: it was mingled with her sustenance, and he waited with a dreadful eagerness for the moment in which its operation should begin! Unasked, she took her harp, which he always loved to hear her touch, and drew from it a few of those soft and melting notes in which her sensible soul delighted. She stood opposite him; she fixed her eyes on him, unconscious of the drowsiness which began to weigh down their beautiful lids, and, in a low voice faltering with expressive sensibility, accompanied it with these words of her own, as they occurred to her:

Ye blossoms of nature, ye dews of the morn.
Which once I beheld with delight;
Ye planets which glitter, with radiance unshorn,
Thro' the dark-bosom'd chaos of night:

No longer your beauties with rapture I see,
Or catch the soft breath of the west:
Ah, what are your beauties, your fragrance to me,
By my Henry no longer possess'd!

O Power Almighty, Dispenser of Good,
Whom trembling and frail we adore,
Might health but revisit and glide thro' his blood,
I could die and petition no more.

She had scarce pronounced the last stanza, when she sunk into a slumber of which she knew not the cause. As she was moving away, a universal convulsion seized the frame of her brother; and all which he had felt burst at once in a deep and dreadful groan from his bosom: he seemed no longer sensible; the last paleness of death hung on his distorted and agonized brows. But that sound, which, from the acuteness of his emotion, had been little less than the expression of frenzy, roused Theresa from her beginning lethargy: she perceived herself conducted from his chamber, and a confused remembrance of her involuntary slumber recurred to her; the sound which had awakened her, every thing seemed to speak the most dreadful tidings. She saw the consternation of those who surrounded her, of Vincent, who supported her, eager, doubting, trembling. Nature made an effort; all her powers returned. She sprung from them—she rushed to the chamber of death—she gazed earnestly on her brother—she pronounced his name—wan, distorted, agonized, he answered not. She clasped him in her arms; she pressed him to her foreboding bosom—he opened his eyes, already overspread with the dimness of death, and fixed them yet expressive of tenderness on her. Hereafter, my dear Theresa, inwardly he said—hereafter—No tears wetted her pale and desolate cheek, but his words seemed to sink into her soul. He made another effort, the last of which expiring nature was capable: he drew her nearer to him, whilst his eyes, intently fixed upward, marked the

fervor he yet felt. Father of Being, thou who gavest, thou who shalt now receive the breath of my existence—assist, support—if it be thy will, hasten the moment when with thee we shall rejoice for ever. She continued to hold him in her arms; she felt the last pulsation of his heart, the last sigh from his lips breathed on her cheek. All which she underwent operating with the opiate she had taken, without closing her eyes, every faculty seemed suspended; she appeared totally insensible. As she had thrown her arms round him, she had locked her fingers, and no persuasions could make her alter their position: force was at length used; her delicate frame felt the injury. She seemed a little roused, and something like recollection dawn'd upon her as they removed her from him; but after putting her hand on her heart, it fell listless and unconscious by her side. For two days she continued in this state, but on the third night a deep and heavy sleep fell on her; it was a flattering symptom, but a few hours put an end to it. Waking, she recollected, she lamented, in terms the most pathetic, her absence from her brother, and talked of his loss.

Vincent could no longer bear to remain near her. Half distracted, he tore himself from her, and mourned over the loss of all his hopes. Her senses were but imperfectly returned; they only pointed out to her the object of her lamentation, and the extent of her misery. Her aunt and Vincent, whose anxiety almost bordered on frenzy, were not recognized by her—they, who had been witnesses, who had participated so greatly in all she had felt. All hopes of restoring her were lost, and her aunt, whose health was at all times but indifferent, affected beyond recovery by the double shock, quickly followed young Morven to the grave.

Miserable as Vincent was, he yet put the affairs of the Major in a proper train; and at the same time wrote to the friends of the lady to whom he had been engaged, and transmitted to them her picture which was taken from his neck when dead, and inclosed it with a few lines which he had dictated before his death, and a lock of his hair.

Mrs. Aylesby never quitted Theresa, but with her Sophy would weep over and vainly attempt to sooth her. Sometimes when the little innocent flung itself on Theresa's neck, and deluged her with her tears, she would weep and gaze on her, but remain otherwise insensible: it awakened a little, however, her attention, and was therefore imagined to be of service. At other times, she would remain for hours resting on her harp only, now and then touching a string; her look cast with a wild and melancholy earnestness towards heaven, her hair falling neglected over her beautiful shoulders, whilst only the deep sighs which at intervals escaped her bosom, shewed any recollection.

In these moments, Vincent, at length become more inured to misery, would fling himself at her feet, and in words the most pathetic conjure her to answer him, to look at him: he would press the emaciated hand which hung by her side, and for a moment attract her eyes; but their rays were again quenched in insensibility, and, again leaning her head against her harp, whilst her tears fell silently on her bosom, her forlorn look of dejection returned.

One evening, however, when he had sat for hours looking at, and sometimes speaking to her, he thought at length that she seemed to awaken, and to move. He spoke again, If you have any comprehension, answer me, my beloved Theresa. She pressed her hand on her heart, and looked at him with attention; and then, shaking her head, said, in a faint voice, but ever unalterably sweet and tender, Alas! I remember nothing—whoever you are, I know you not.

Those words, dreadful as they were, were grateful: she spoke, she was at last roused, and hope sprung up in his breast. He sent immediately for her physician; an alteration was approaching. She was attacked with a fever, and it was not thought possible she should recover; but unexpectedly she sustained it; in a few days it was subdued, and her clearer perceptions returned. She remembered her misfortune, but she wept over it: she heard of the loss of her aunt, and bore it without relapsing.

By her attendance on her friend, the health of Ruth was injured; and Theresa, who had been removed during her state of insensibility to her house, perceived it with concern. Her solicitude for the ease of others attended her to the verge of the grave: she formed an idea of relieving Ruth, by having herself conveyed to the house where she first saw the younger Burell. His attachment was yet dear to her, and supported, though it was incapable of restoring her. He would sit for hours in silence, mingling his tears with hers. Accompanied by her maid, who was much attached to her, thither she determined to go.

Ruth gave into this whim, and suffered her to depart, at the same time resolving to follow her; but the illness of her child, who unexpectedly sickened with the small-pox, prevented her. The heart of Theresa foreboded they should meet no more: she pressed her in a last feeble embrace; she dropped a tear of resignation on her cheek, and was conveyed away. The child, whose little affections had flown out so warmly to her, was prevented with difficulty from running after her. Theresa, at the last turning of the road, where it was possible to behold the little habitation, raised herself up: she saw the handkerchief of Ruth, and with her white hand waved to her a last farewell.

At Bath Vincent met with the young ensign Villers and his sister, and the latter, deeply affected, as a tribute of gratitude, earnestly intreated to be permitted to return with Miss Morven to the apartments she had now quitted, to watch over and tend her. Theresa heard and willingly granted this request. From that hour Johanna fulfilled to her every office of tenderness which a heart gentle and grateful could suggest. Theresa at length arrived at the end of her journey; and the following letters, which conclude her story, are all dated from the little retired lodgings where she first saw Vincent.

LETTER XLVII.

THERESA MORVEN *to Mrs. AYLESBY.*

I AM arrived at this spot, and am nearly in the same state in which I left you, perhaps a little weaker.—

O my Ruth, I had fancied that I could write to you; but I am incapable. When I attempted to sit up without support, a universal tremor and faintness seized me, the pen dropped from my fingers, and you will be indebted to Joannah for all my future letters. Sustained by the trembling arm and unremitting attention of Vincent, I am just capable of dictating.

My dear Ruth, when I recollect all the past, I am yet thankful. When I remember that the sun has arisen, and I beheld not his beams, that he has set, and I was unconscious of their departure, I rejoice that I am again able to address my Maker, to receive comfort from his divine promises. I shall not, my dear Ruth, depart insensible of his mercies.

How vain are the imagination of man's heart! I thought to meet my brother, and then my happiness would be complete. I did meet him—but, alas! this remembrance, how dreadful! disorders me.—Dear shade! if, released from the weakness of mortality, thou yet hoverest round the languid head of thy Theresa, O mark to her the period of her existence, the moment when she shall rejoin thee for ever.

LETTER XLVIII.

THE long, long night is past; the morning, whose breath has so often awakened me to pleasure, has risen. In short and interrupted slumbers I have beheld my brother. His mild countenance beamed with divine pity. He gathered his white robe from behind him; with his pale hand he beckoned to me, and disappeared. I am convinced of it, I shall follow and I shall meet him—

“Who was in life but as a dream to me;”

and, freed from the repinings which yet press at my heart, I shall be happy.

My dear Ruth, this tenderest of human beings, this affectionate and delicate Vincent, is absent; and I own to you, when I behold him, when I see him cast his fine eyes to heaven in prayer for me, when I mark the melancholy that overshadows and devours him, I feel a momentary repining; I look back upon the world, and think I could yet remain there. There was a time, my Ruth, that I should have repined at being one of those, who depart unknown to the world—whose names, consigned to oblivion,

——“Without or infamy or fame,
“Close the blank business of this mortal scene.”

But those moments of vanity, if such they were, are past. Frail and inconsistent as I am, I trust that the errors incident to my nature, will meet with pity from the God of Mercy. I endeavour at resignation, I listen to his holy and immutable word, and experience it. I remember the raptures which I felt at my release from confinement; as an error, I lament over those energies which have destroyed me. I now reflect, almost with envy, on the tranquillity of those whom no feelings awaken from the long calm of life, whose days glide away ever the same, and ever undisturbed. But I was not born to be one of them * * * * *

Supported by Vincent, and the amiable girl who now writes to you, I have been conducted into the little garden. I stopped at the door where I first saw Vincent approaching me, and a tear fell on his shoulder as I recollected the emotions I then first experienced. We were silent, but I saw all his anguish, and would have given the world to conceal my own. When we arrived at the low wall which bounds the garden, I rested on a couch already placed there for me. Vincent attempted to smother his emotion, but he was capable only of hurrying from me to conceal it. The soft breath of the western wind, which revived all nature around, ran with a cold and deadly shivering to my heart—I could not help recalling to mind those beautiful and natural lines of Michael Bruce, so applicable to the situation of your faded Theresa.

Starting and shiv’ring in the inconstant wind,
Meagre and pale, the ghost of what I was;
Beneath some blasted tree I lie reclin’d,
And count the silent moments as they pass:

The winged moments, whose unstaying speed
 No art can stop or in their course arrest;
Whose flight shall shortly count me with the dead,
 And lay me down in peace with them that rest.

Vincent knows my passion for music: at some distance he touched a few stops on his flute; the sound overcame me—I was conveyed in doors, and the couch on which I now extend my feeble limbs, perhaps, I shall rise from no more.

LETTER XLIX.

HOW does the soul linger in this habitation of clay! the links which unite them are not yet broken within me. Shall the day be ever again beheld by these eyes? Surely it is impossible; something assures me I shall behold no more the blush of the morning sky, the still fragrance of the dews of evening.

My dear Ruth, with trembling yet steady hope I meet my end; I go to the house of darkness, but the time of that darkness will have a period, and we know it: "The morning *will* dawn on the night of the grave." This fortitude which I feel, which inspires and animates me, why cannot I infuse it into the heart of Vincent, and of you, my dear Ruth?

I have performed the most sacred offices of religion, and feel myself placid and resigned: I can even look at Vincent; I can think of all which I lose in him, and lie down to close my eyes in the long and heavy slumber of the grave in peace.

* * * *

A severe fainting has attacked me: on recovering I found myself in the garden; when, at length, I opened my eyes, I beheld Vincent kneeling by my side, and concealing his face in the pillow. Vincent, said I, and pressed my feeble hand on his shoulder, I am not yet departed.

Ah! Ruth, why does he love me with this ardor which consumes him?

He started at the sound of my voice, uttered a thanksgiving, and he pressed his lips on my forehead.

O my friend! when the last, last damp of death shall be found there, how will he support it? I thought of that moment, which with rapid and certain steps I beheld approaching, and attempted to console him. My dear Vincent, in regretting me, you will pay a tribute which perhaps I deserve from you—but exert yourself; in a period, how short to the duration of eternity, we shall meet, we shall be happy. Resort to religion, Vincent, and even on this spot you will find consolations; you will remember that tender and virtuous passion which you have here inspired and participated; and the hand which I now press trembling in mine, shall close these eyes, which never beheld, which, had ages been added to my existence, never could have beheld with love any object but yourself.

I had wished to say more to him, but the cold tremor of his hand made me fear for him. It is you then, my dear Ruth, who I must trust will comfort his agitated heart; it is to you that I must confide my last tender remembrances to his generous brother: tell him, in all the pangs I have endured, I have thought of him as he deserved: tell him he is united with Vincent in my last prayers to heaven. And, when capable of her mother's sensibility, tell my little Sophy the short story of your Theresa's life; from that let her learn to regulate the passions, even the most innocent of her heart: it is the impetuosity of mine, I am persuaded, which has done much in destroying me. Mark to her, my dear Ruth, the disappointment to which all earthly expectations are liable, even at the moment when we look on their completion as certain. If we would live, we must regulate, we must even subdue the tenderest feelings of the human soul. You will enjoy, my dear Ruth, with her, with your Frank, the competency you deserve; and sometimes, when the revolving year brings back the remembrance of your first seeing Theresa, you will bestow a mutual sigh to the memory of the friend who loved you.

Farewel, my dear Ruth—confusion and darkness seem to seize on my intellects—I feel the tears of Vincent, but I see not the eyes from whence they flow; a thick mist obscures my own. All will soon be over. I am to be laid at the side of my brother, for whom I lived, for whom I die.

LETTER L.

VINCENT BURELL, *to* FREDERICK BURELL.

THE dreadful moment of certainty is come—it is past!—

The worm now tastes that rosy mouth,
Where glow'd short time the smiles of youth;
And in my heart's dear home
Her snowy bosom loves to lie.

Yes, those pure lips where greater sweetness dwelt “than breath shut up from a new-folded rose,” are closed and pale for ever. This purest spirit that ever inhabited a daughter of mortality, is fled. Such is the story you have to hear, and it is mine to relate it to you. It was midnight, and her senses had been some hours imperfect, when, on a sudden, she recollected me. Meek and patient to her last moments, she pressed my hand, cold almost as her own, to her lips, and as I bent over the departing angel, in a soft sigh of pity and resignation her gentle spirit returned to the bosom of him who gave it.

It is for colder hearts than mine to describe feelings; but I have seen the damp vault receive the beloved of my soul. I retain my being and wonder at it. To-morrow I embark to meet you. We will wander together, and once every year we will return to the scene made sacred by her residence and departure. I will point to you the spot where her tears have fallen; perhaps then the sources of mine may be opened, and we shall weep over it together.

Angel of light!—“of my lost youth, thou only bride!” overshadow me with thy wings. Breathe that religion which thou recommendest to me through my soul, and I may yet be resigned to the decrees of heaven.

Forgive me, my brother, as you feel for me. The moment of our meeting will be dreadful: arm yourself with fortitude to bear your own sorrows, and to sooth those of,

Your miserable brother,
VINCENT BURELL.

FINIS.