

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscrib'd with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

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

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

VOL. I.

BATH:
PRINTED and SOLD, for the AUTHOR,
BY S. HAZARD:
Sold also by G.G.J. and J. ROBINSON, Paternoster-Row,
and T. HOOKMAN, New Bond-Street, LONDON; SHIER-
CLIFF, BRISTOL; and all other Booksellers.

MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

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DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER I.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle Vue.

IN the present situation of my affairs, it is equally impossible for me to combat your arguments, or do away the doubts of my prudence; which, notwithstanding your agreeable raillery, I perceive you entertain; time, my dear Major, and time *only*, will unravel what you term the mystery of my conduct; in the mean while I acknowledge the justness of your position; you draw the parallel between the incertitude of common events, and the natural imbecility of the human mind, with great truth; your conclusions are perhaps severe, but they are not less just, for that severity.

In the morning of our days, however great the misfortunes of our family, however indigent our circumstances, and however friendless our situation; still there is an hilarity, a gay confidence which gild the opening hemisphere of our days, and lifts the aspiring mind out of the reach of those very ills, under which at a more advanced period of life it would infallibly sink; and as the objects which engage our early pursuits, either totally elude our eager grasp, or being obtained become no longer desirable, hope and fancy, the two grand supporters of the human system, create successively, phantom after phantom, to fill the vacuum left by disappointment or satiety, with a something or other as ensnaring, and perhaps, as visionary as the former; and in this pleasing delirium are we amused: thus, in the expectation of the joys of that to-morrow which never comes, do we trifle away our strength of mind and body, till experience and the decay of our faculties inform us,

“Every day is a satire on the last,” and well it is that this is so; the mind would else, in the evening of life, want fortitude to support its own dignity; when sated with some, and torn from others, of our early enjoyments; if we were not convinced of their futility, we should either sink into an apathy disgraceful to humanity; or waste our age, still more unprofitably than our youth, in unavailing regrets over the urn of our departed joys.

No, Major, I have not forgot the many years I sighed for Lady Mary,—the anguish I felt, when honor tore from my bleeding heart—the flattering hope her goodness inspired—and I yet feel the reluctant, but ardent transport, with which I resigned my fate to her facinating generosity; still less can I wean my soul from a recollection of the five happy years of congenial bliss, which passed, too, too rapidly since our marriage. Oh Major! have I not loved her through all the vicissitudes of fortune? have I not seen her

where she was not? when ever joy entered my heart, was it not in her form? and when I was overwhelmed with sorrow, her image was my solace, *yet we are parted*, well, “not to deserve but to hear misfortunes is, the task which nature assigns to man; more, is out of the limits of his power.”

But although, next to my own self acquittal, I value the good opinion of my friend, let me not meanly seek justification at the expence of a woman, whose excess of affection for the most unhappy of men, is the real source of every unamiable trait in her character.

Lady Mary actually has, (or which is in effect exactly the same thing, thinks she has) cause for her jealousy. Her passions are strong, her attachments, as has been proved, are founded on principle: Every sentiment of her soul is sanctioned by the strictest honor; her disgusts are no less strong than her partialities; and from the same source; it is a want of her favourite virtues, it is mental deficiencies to which she never can be reconciled: her good or ill opinion is not the result of caprice, or sudden impression she is, perhaps, the strictest observer in the world—neither sex, age, or situation are of any import to her, in the selection of those she honors with her favour; it is the soul governed by reason, and guided by honor, with whom her's forms an alliance; and it is necessary to her peace, that her adopted favourites should approve themselves worthy the unreserved confidence she reposes in them: when a mind thus steady in its attachment, happens also, like Lady Mary's, to be fraught with sensibility, its sufferings, at seeing its idol defaced by the appearance of infidelity and ingratitude, must be extreme; she charges me with *cruelty—cruelty to her*, to my *wife* the first *love* of my youth. I persist, she says, in injuring *her*, and in dishonoring myself—what a task is mine?—I besought her to give some credit to my principles, to confide in my honor: but when does reason and passion form an union in the mind of woman? rage and anguish swelled her fine features.

Honor! cried she, what is the honor that obliges General Moncrass to destroy the peace of his wife?

Time, I told her, (and I told her true) would explain the motives which actuated my conduct.

Her features assumed an affected placidity, a smile of contempt took place of passion.

Till then sir, said she disdainfully, presenting her hand to her father, ‘we will not meet.’

Had not Lord Ruthven been present, had he not treated me in a way that forbad all humiliation on my side; I should, I believe, have fought to prevail on Lady Mary to hear reason; but I did not; I suffered them to leave the room, and retired, not a little out of humour to my own apartment, where I remained some hours, unable totally to subdue the resentment; I could not help feeling, at some parts of Lord Ruthven's behaviour; and distressed at the impossibility of convincing Lady Mary of the injury she did me: her uneasiness wrung my soul, and after a thousand different resolutions, I went to her apartment, meaning to try to sooth and pacify her; perhaps it was better for us both, that her jealousy had precipitated her into a measure, which rendered me miserable. I know not, Major, had she condescended to be more grieved than angry, how I could have withstood her tears; yet there *is a cause, a cause, a story*, that must be awhile concealed:

had I in a moment of weakness suffered it to escape me, how should I have sharpened the arrows of unmerited misfortune, already piercing with ruthless violence, the soft bosom of unoffending purity! and how have wounded my dear mistaken Mary, in a part where she is most vulnerable?

She was not in her dressing room, and not chusing to subject myself to a second insult, from a man, whose age, as well as consanguinity, prevented my adopting a gentleman's means of resentment: I returned to my own apartment, without seeing, or being seen by any part of the family; during the time I spent there, my swiss made several humble efforts to gain admittance, but the angry voice in which I bid him not disturb me, at length prevented his return.

At nine I rang; judge my surprise, he informed me the Earl and Lady Mary had ordered the travelling coach, and left the house soon after I retired to my library. Julia was absolutely forced from Reuben, who was sternly commanded not to presume to write, or approach their residence; I found him in the drawing room where they left him, stretched on the carpet without motion, and almost without sense; her woman, a discreet person who has lived with her from her infancy, was left in care of her Lady's wardrobe; and the Maitre d'Hotel presented me a letter from Lord Ruthven, signifying, very laconically, that his health would oblige him to return to Bath; that it would not be agreeable to him to occupy any part of the same house with *me*, or my *family*; that as the house in the Crescent was a ready furnished one, and as there were many others would suit him quite as well, he requested to know, whether I should continue in it, in order that he might give his servant directions accordingly. I immediately removed myself and suite to York house, from whence I wrote to my wife entreating her return, and professing, as I justly might, my sorrow for what had happened.

The terms of our re-union were, that I should immediately resign Agnes De-Courci to her protection; and pledge my honor never to enquire how she had disposed of her; but to rest confident in her generosity.

That I should make her acquainted with the *family*, *friends*, and *connections* of the said Agnes; and the manner, and place where I had first known her; and indeed every circumstance respecting the *girl*, as she contemptuously called her.

Those terms *I could* not comply with; Lady Mary *would* accept no other; and the Earl's pride keeping warm his daughter's jealousy, my letters were returned unopened; my messengers treated with personal insult; and finally, young Butler came to me, and very respectfully hoped I would pardon his obeying the commands of the Earl, and Lady Mary; who commissioned him to wait on me, with a draft of the articles of our separation; which, with infinite concern, he begged to leave for my perusal.

The Earl's spirit is a princely one, and his daughter, is in this respect indeed his daughter; but I believe, Major, I need not tell you, I rejected all offered advantage, and

declined every claim on her fortune—we are now parted, she says to meet no more—pass the blot, Major, perhaps it was not a tear.

But why you ask do I not explain the mystery that distresses her, if I can do it with honor to myself?

It is possible, Major, that a man may have indispensable reasons for concealing his actions, who has none to be *ashamed* of *them*; and to entrust you with a secret, I actually want courage, yes, Mary, my beloved wife, it is in thy noble, thy upright heart, the dagger must be planted. Great God! whose decrees are inscrutable, by what a combination of events, what improbable, and nearly impossible means; am I become the instrument of thy vengeance on the offspring of the guilty? yet dare I murmur, when perhaps the severe task, which honor and justice imposes on me; is the only thing that could mitigate the pain I am doomed to inflict?

Julia Neville, heiress to the house of Ruthven, and the immense wealth of her father, is a lovely girl, her mother lives in this her only child; the Earl reckons on quarterings; at least equal to his own, for her heiress's lozenge; and builds much on seeing her nobly espoused; when, as he plans it, his title may descend to her second son: Lord Morden, eldest son to the Marquis of L, and heir to a dukedom offers proposals, which are at this time under consideration; Lord M. is dissipated; Julia, thoughtless; this marriage may be honorable, but it cannot be happy: Lady Mary disapproved it from the first. The equal familiarity, and the terms brother, and sister, in which my Reuben, and Miss Neville have lived; would, I hoped, have prevented their imbibing a warmer sentiment for each other; the contrary however has happened, they are mutually attached: my wife, whose generous love for me, knew not the law of prudence; contrary to my wish, saw, and encouraged their growing passion; she had no idea, that a youth formed under *my* eye, and educated by *me*, could be an uneligible match for any woman; my daughter is charming; she would say, she will also be very rich, and that paltry advantage is the only one she has over Reuben Moncrass; these were the effusions of a fond heart, not the arguments of reason. I could not endure to know the worthy old Earl's laudable schemes, for the aggrandizement of his family, should always be obstructed by me; I expressed myself with great warmth on this subject, both to Lady Mary and Reuben: the latter, I am happy to say is a lad of honor; passion spoke one language, justice another, he preferred the last, and coincided with his father. I had formed a plan to send him to Portugal, where under the auspices of his mother's family, he might have acquired at once the advantages of travel, and military experience: the Earl forgot in *his* anger, the respect due to my character, as well as his own, and charged me with meanly plotting to gain his grand-daughter, and her wealth, for my son; after this, you will be surprised to hear that I actually, *now*, have it in view to hasten the match, which I before so earnestly opposed; I have accordingly relinquished my first intention, of sending my son abroad, and ceased to blame, tho' I would not, at present, be known to approve of his love for Julia. Lady Mary will soon be reconciled to an union she once encouraged, and receive the little rebel into grace.

But Oh! my gentle Agnes, where is the maternal bosom, that should sustain thy drooping loveliness, kiss thy falling tear, assert thy right, and avenge thy wrong! thou poor deserted victim, shall Moncrass forsake thee? shall he sacrifice to his own private peace, the right which justice and misfortune should render dearer than the life-blood which flows from his heart? under what plea should he seek a sanction for that innate baseness, which could reject the supplications of the saint who consigned thee to his protection?—What? abandon thee to defamation, give up thy spotless fame to the rude tongue of slander, to gratify the fond, the selfish longings of my own heart! Oh memory! dress not the past in such seducing forms; avaunt, ye selfish tempters, I turn from recollection, from the aspirations of unbounded love, to injured innocence; to the modest *sweetness* of Agnes De-Courci.—Thou unsuspecting purity, how unconscious art thou, of the pangs I suffer for thee?—Her amiable sensibility renders her anxious to sooth the inquiet of my mind, she has no conception it is possible, *she* can have given pain to the wife of her benefactor as she *will* style me, much less does she conceive, she is the sole cause of a seperation, she constantly deplores; nor would I for worlds her delicacy should be wounded, by the shocking intelligence; to prevent this is now my chief care, I have forbid my servants speaking at all on the subject, and see so few people it is next to impossible it can happen.

I suppose I have aggravated my sins, and perhaps incurred your censure, Major, by a step which I acknowledge I have taken for my *own* gratification.

Deprived of every other comfort, I have brought Agnes to Belle Vue; I dare not consign her to oblivion, she is born to shine the ornament of society; her beauty, elegance, and above all the captivating graces of her conversation, the propensity of her sentiments, and the poignancy of her wit, were not bestowed on her for concealment.

And are these then, you ask, the claims to which the peace of Lady Mary is sacrificed? forbear, Major, to probe the heart which *would*, but cannot unfold itself to the eye of friendship. No, my friend her claims are those of birth, virtue, and misfortunes, and Moncrass is her protector, farewell,

MONCRASS.

Do not forget the young man, I recommended to your good offices, with the secretary of war; Lady Mary wishes much to tempt him from his hermitage; he is the most excentric being in the world; he knows not or believes not, that man was formed for society; he vegetates, and with very fine talents, believes, *that* is all the business he has in the world. Mrs. Butler, a charming little creature who calls him brother, was brought up with him by an odd old woman, whose own romantic turn, as well as her little fortune, she left divided between Mrs. B. and this Harley; young Butler, happily for the lady, took her out of the trammels of romance, very soon after her aunts death; and she is become so sensible of the wrong bias, her mind received, and so desirous Harley should share her advantages, that I believe, it is at her request, through the interest of her mother-in-law, that Lady Mary patronizes him; however, be that as it may, it will afford me great

pleasure, to shew my beloved wife, how much I respect her commands.

LETTER II.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Soho-Square, London.

NEVER, my dear Lady Mary, have I met with any thing so distressing as the accident which prevents my attending you in *your* still greater misfortune; the dislocation of a limb, is at any time, and in any circumstance, a greivous calamity; and a restoration to its use, so great a blessing, that I feel myself, I hope, for the first time in my life, guilty of ingratitude to my maker, by giving way to a fretful impatience at my confinement. I have several times attempted to begin my journey to Bath, my ancle is set and every dangerous symptom conquered, but I cannot bear the motion of my carriage, altho' I have sent it to Hatchet's, to have it new hung, on purpose. My temper, which you have said was so easy, it was not in the power of common events to discompose it,—is no longer so;—I am miserable at my inability to come to you; I have lost the first of blessings, the will to be pleased: if content be the fountain of felicity, no wonder its reverse should produce so many evils: I am degenerating into one of the pests of society, an ill tempered old woman; my gentle daughter in law, with all her patience will, I fear, be weary of her office, she has been the sweetest nurse in the world; my son actually runs away from me; in a word madam, General Moncrass has not only robbed *you* of your peace, he has also destroyed *mine*, and he has injured me yet more, he has lessened my estimation of God's most noble work, or indeed filled me with doubts of there being such a thing, in existence; where shall we seek an honest man after such a falling off in him, it is not only himself, and you, he has actually dishonored mankind; I am all wonder, amazement and indignation.

Your billet is the herald of grief, and wrote in so incoherent a style, that had not the same messenger brought Lord Ruthven's instruction to my son, I could not have comprehended its import.

Your amiable, and undeviating attention to the health of your father, is at this period almost as great a hardship on me, as my own confinement; since I flatter myself, the same friendly heart, which has had the happiness to console you, under so many disagreeable events heretofore, would not *now* decrease in power, when its will, and wishes, are more lively than ever; withhold not, I implore you, my dear Lady Mary, the particulars of your heart wounding story, from your faithful Constance; gratify the most painful curiosity I ever felt; and again try the efficacy of the same remedy, which once was used to releive you; suffer me to participate in this, as I have done in all your former troubles.

Will the world, you ask, spare you? will it not rather consider the ingratitude and perfidy of the General, as a proper punishment due to the weakness that would pursue him in violation of female delicacy?

The world, my amiable friend, has seen with what exemplary fortitude, patience, and resignation, you bore your hard destiny with Neville; the laudability of the motives that influenced your first choice are well known; and the world bears loud testimony, to that generosity of sentiment, which induced you to bestow your invaluable self, and large fortune, on one whom it esteemed a model of worth and honor; and behold a miracle is wrought in your favour; public report speaks for once, the language of truth; it is unanimous in condemning the General, and acquitting my friend.

Major Melrose called this morning to inform my son, the commission for Mr. Harley lay at the war office; I did not see him, he lamented your domestic misfortune, my son says, very feelingly.

Mrs. Butler, and indeed every person who has the pleasure to know Mr. Harley, wishes to see him divested of his penchant for rural simplicity; he has really fine qualities, and a very good understanding; there is also, as your ladyship have observed, an interesting something in his manner, which never fails to speak to the heart; mine I confess is much attached to him, and I join very cordially in the general opinion, that he would be an amiable inhabitant of the great world.

Do you know Mr. Montford, Mrs. Butler's rich uncle? he promised, he says, to his sister, the late Mrs. Ann Montford, that he would leave his large fortune between her two pets; Caroline still stands high in his good opinion, but poor Harley, if he continues to live at the hermitage, will, I fear, be totally out of favor: the great regard he has for the young man is, perhaps, the best excuse for the petulance, which ever breaks out when his manner of life is the subject of conversation; he will give, he swears, one half of his fortune as he promised to Mrs. Butler, but if Harley persists in his indolence and inactivity, he will build an hospital with the other, for ideots, who, like himself, have toiled, and moiled, for other people's children. Caroline is generally in tears on those occasions; I never knew a stronger sisterly affection; and as to James, I only wish his eldest brother and himself had so great an affection for each other, as subsists between him and young Harley.

We are unanimous in our opinion, that if the young man could be prevailed on to accept the commission, it would be productive of every change in his sentiments, his friends can desire; but your ladyship must decide for us; it is not a desirable thing to receive favours from people whose conduct deprives them of our esteem: and we are by no means sure *you* would approve of his accepting the commission from the general, should his inclination coincide with the desire of his friends, which is not at all a settled point. It is very hard to eradicate the impressions made at an early period of life, on sensible minds; the more sensible the more likely will they be to retain their first prejudices, how absurd soever these may be; more especially if the appearance of reason can be possibly introduced to support the weak fabric on which they are founded. It required a very strong attachment to wean Mrs. Butler from her predelection for that pleasant, odd retirement, where she was brought up; she very innocently still avers, that tho' her husband's presence has power to render every place a paradise to her, yet the

moment she is alone her mind reverts to the dear hermitage, which she prefers to any of the fine seats she has seen; we were there last summer, it is merely a pleasant spot, in a fine country, turned and twisted into all sorts of shapes, except those which common sense would approve, yet it is pretty, you cannot help being pleased, at the same moment that you are convinced the walks, and embellishments, are the flights of a romantic imagination, too warm for reason, too abstruse for probability; *here*, you see nymphs designed for emblems of the coldest chastity, exalted on pedestals, round which are scrolls of passionate verses; *there* an Anchorite presents you with a translation from Ovid, and in the most retired part of the grove a winged cupid, and a death's head, occupy each a corner on an altar raised to Diana, with fifty other absurdities equally characteristic of the late owner's mind; where love for Mr. Neville, and religion, are said to have formed an unaccountable mixture to the hour of her death; nay, the scandalous chronicle has set young Harley down for her son, by that unhappy man: But tho' Mrs. Montford's character was an extraordinary one, all who knew her acquitted it of impurity.

It rests with you, Lady Mary, whether we shall call this young man to a part on the busy stage of life; or leave him to the impulse which, *he* says, impels him to conclude his existence, as he began it in the humble practice of private virtue, in the exercise of benevolence, and in the pursuit of mental knowledge.

But do you forgive me, Lady Mary, for writing so much on a subject, so little interesting to your present feelings? none of my family would take a single step, where General Moncrass was concerned, without your direction:—and after all, a subject that will carry a mind corroding with sorrow, out of itself, must be acceptable: if therefore, it has a moment diverted your attention from the pangs ingratitude ever leaves in a generous bosom, the relief will be mutual, as it has given a short cessation to the sympathetic concern ever felt for my dearest cousin, by her faithful

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

If the recital of your misfortune affect you too, much, let Julia be your amanuensis.—I shall be wretched till I hear from you.

LETTER III.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Mrs. Butler.

Bath.

NO, Constance, no;—painful as is the task, no pen can describe the dreadful anguish which preys on me, but my own. Alas! and can it be?—have I endured a worse than Turkish slavery, when the mind, regardless of any other hardship, felt only the disappointment of its first fond, its blasted hope?—And did Providence signalize itself in favor of my breaking heart; by freeing me from a tyrant I abhorred, by returning to my faithful bosom the man I adored, when even hope was no more for this?—Did I exult in the possession of wealth; did I seek him in the cave of obscurity; and was I willing to unite my splendid fortune with an indigent wanderer, to be insulted, injured, and dishonored?—Faithless man! he thinks not of the dotage that would have died for him: enjoying now the estates of his ancestors, by the repeal of the sentence which consigned his rebellious family to disgrace, and confiscated their inheritance: he forgets the distance from which my love reached him;—fatal meanness! he abandoned me in my youth; left me to the tyranny of custom, to be disposed of by my father, as pride or caprice directed;—yet, I meanly sought him, sought him among the wretched herd, whose crimes had rendered them aliens to their country:—*and now*; but this is not what my friend is impatient for;—this is invective, and not narrative. Oh Constance! where, or how shall I begin?—Julia!—can Julia paint the anguish she is a stranger to?—can she recount the injuries she has no conception of?—Oh no! let her still remain in ignorance of her mother's weakness: I should blush to let *her* know how much I deserve the fate I have met: you only ever shall witness the pangs I endure; to others I appear supported by a conscious dignity; and wounded pride; while the agony that tears my soul,—the floods of sorrow that now stain my paper;—explain to *you* that the real anguish which distracts me; flows from ill-requited love: so in the time of Mr. Neville, when his libertinism first;—and then his tyranny and avarice, deprived me of every joy of society.—My patience, my placidity, held me up as an example of conjugal obedience and forbearance:—alas! the shallow world knew not that imagination had raised an altar, to a wandering, a first unfortunate lover, in my mind; where every passion retired to pay adoration; and left me, totally, and equally impenetrable to the sensations of either joy or grief, from common events; except where my child was concerned;—there, indeed, I felt, that strong as my passion for Moncrass was, the ties of maternal fondness; would dispute with him, the empire of my heart:—but, let me not dwell on the past,—the delightful past;—when, tho' torn forever, as I *then* believed, from all my hopes; I thought of him with undescribable pleasure;—saw him, tho' poor, and a fugitive, robed in honor, and wrapt in integrity; believed it was excess of love induced him to leave me, and fondly persued his destiny with my unceasing prayers.—Oh! what a change!—Cruel Moncrass!—Why hast thou torn the illusion from my senses?—Why must the angel of my adoration be changed to a demon of darkness?—Yet, yet I wander from my purpose, and you are yet in suspense.

M.M.

LETTER IV.

Lady Mary Moncrass in continuation.

Bath.

YOU know, that last winter, one of the happiest among the happy; I attended my father to Bath: the paralytic stroke, by which he was attack'd, rendered *his* going necessary, and I could not bear he should take the journey alone. I had then, been five years the wife of General Moncrass; whose unremitting tenderness, and apparent increase of love, left me no wish ungratified: he watched every turn of my countenance; could penetrate into my most secret thoughts; and his judgment, on every occasion, appeared to be the result of mine: our sentiments, manners, and inclinations, were the same; one soul seemed to animate our bodies; and so entirely were we paired, that notwithstanding the difference in our religion, I exulted in the certainty of being finally judg'd by the same God, and receiving, with him, the same immortal Fiat.

In this happy security I remained, till the week before we left Bath; where, one morning, the swiss delivered my husband a note, which I should not have observed, but from the consternation visible in his countenance; he started up; enquired eagerly for the person who had brought it; and on being told it was a chair-man, call'd for his hat, and abruptly left the house.

Surprise, astonishment, and a kind of instinctive terror; a dread of something, I knew not what, took possession of my mind: my father started; he feared, he said, it was a challenge; my apprehension coinciding with his opinions, I fainted instantly away.

I recovered to uncertain terror: he did not return till time to dress;—and then, so altered; his countenance so pale, so woe-begone, my heart sunk at the sight.—

I flew to his arms; implored him to make me the partner of his sorrow, as I had long been of his joys:—conceive my astonishment! he did indeed press me to his heart, but retired to his chamber without speaking. Julia followed, I *could not*; the poor child hung about him, threw herself at his feet, called him father; implored him to reveal the cause of his distress,—but all in vain; tears burst from his eyes; he begged to be alone.

Distracted, and alarmed, I questioned the swiss; he only knew, a chair-man had left the note: I have poor talents for intrigue,—nevertheless, there was something so mysterious in all this, that I asked Gallini if he should know the chair-man? he answered, he believed he should: I gave him orders to find him out, and bring him to me.

The servant had not left the room a moment, before I repented of what I had done:—my Reuben, thought I, is in affliction; his heart is free from guile; he is incapable of vice; *shall I*, by prying into the cause of his grief encrease it? or, by tampering meanly

with his servant, let them see I can suspect the best of human hearts?—No, Reuben, I will not so injure thee!

I rang, to countermand the orders I had given the swiss.

It was too late, he was gone to execute my commands; and in a few moments brought the chair-man.

I was now exceedingly embarrassed, to send the man away, after I had taken so much pains to find him, before I had asked a single question, would, I thought look odd; and to ask of him any leading one, was an insult to my husband: at length, I bade Gallini bring him in, and wait.

Friend, said I, you brought a note here this morning, from which, I apprehend, some danger to the General, as I have reason to think it is a challenge.—

A challenge, my Lady, answered the fellow;—no, no; you need not fear that; the gentlewoman did not look as if she would hurt his honor:—why she fell into fits for joy, at sight of him; I was fain to fetch the doctor.—

That moment was the tomb of my peace; all the joy of confidential love instantly deserted me: the smiling train of unsuspecting faith, of undeviating sincerity, forsook my sad heart;—and oh! with what fell guests were the miserable vacancies supplied; I trembled:—“a woman in *fits for joy!*”—who?—what could she be?—yet, even then, in that horrid moment, I was not totally off my guard. I dismissed the fellow, and immediately sent Curtis to the White-Hart: she return'd in an hour, and her intelligence distracted me.

Two ladies had come there in a post-chaise; they eagerly enquired where General Moncrass might be found, and dispatched a billet to him:—the General immediately followed the messenger. One of the ladies was extremely ill, and fainted in his arms; the other retired, and left Moncrass with the invalid: they were shut up together four hours before he left the inn. The lady was then very much indisposed,—but had, notwithstanding, ordered horses early in the morning.

Dinner was served; my faithless husband excused himself from coming down; he had letters to write of the last importance, and begged we would dispense with his company:—my father, poor man! enjoys his meals; and Julia, having her favorite Reuben with her, was too happy to perceive her mother's misery:—*but for me*; yet I need not describe to you, how the time passed with *me*.

At six, he ordered his chair; and returned at seven. I was really indisposed, and my looks indicated the disorder of my mind.—Deceitful to the last, he even affected concern, and dropt a tear upon my hand; I disguised my indignation; and he retired, at my request, to a seperate apartment, glad, no doubt, of an excuse so conformable to his own wishes.

At five in the morning, he was again out: I saw his hasty, perturbed, his guilty step, passing quick under my window. I had, let me confess my weakness, been up the whole night; and *now* only threw myself, in agony, on the bed.

He returned home before ten, (our breakfast hour.) A more placid look, now concealed the dark thoughts that occupied his mind; Curtis told *him*, I had rested ill, and was *now* sleeping; he excused himself from joining my father, and Julia at breakfast, and shut himself in the library.

Curtis took the opportunity to renew her enquires at the inn: the women were gone; one of them was so ill, that Doctor Cary had been sent for, who administered a cordial medicine, which had, in some measure, composed her: he strenuously opposed her undertaking a journey, and told the landlady, he should not be surprised if she expired on the road; but she was not to be deterred.

In the morning, the General was in her chamber very early: he carried her in his arms to the chaise; embraced them both several times, and so extremely did this separation affect him: after he had left the carriage,—twice did he return, and as often were the tender adieus repeated: this is the sum of what could be learned at the inn.—

It was now, my dear Constance, I resolved, for the first time, in my turn, to play the hypocrite: I still affected to be unable to leave my chamber. Three days elapsed; then, he said, he had business of importance in London, which required his immediate presence: tho' his manner of announcing our separation was as novel as criminal; I took no notice, but engaged a relation of Curtis to follow him; and observe all his actions.

Imagine, my friend, what I suffered in this painful interval: many were the hours in which I was lost to a sense of my sorrow!—many, in which I gave myself up to rage, and madness;—and many, in which I besought the Almighty to strengthen me with patience. At length; reason, and reflection, came to my aid;—pride also, female pride, contributed to fix my resolution; which once formed, I determined invariably to adhere to.

At the end of a week, my agent returned, having watched Moncrass in all his manoeuvres, till he left London; and had come as far on his way back as Lord B—'s, where he meant to stay a day, or two; and my agent having no means of getting access to the family; he had there left him, and returned with his intelligence to me.

On leaving Bath,—my God!—How have I patience to give you this detail?—What, but my unalterable friendship, my respect to your opinion, my confidence in your affection, could give me spirits, or power to retrace events, which has left me the most miserable of beings?

On leaving Bath, General Moncrass rode across the country to Dover; where he again met the two women; one of whom he put on board the packet, under the care of a

female attendant, who had been waiting there for her: the other he conveyed to London; and placed her as the daughter of a deceased officer, in the house of Madame De-Vallmont, the widow of a french merchant; a woman, as it appeared, of respectable character. The young creature is beautiful, and well-educated; Moncrass visited her constantly; domestics were immediately engaged, and every thing attended to, that could add to her pleasure, or convenience; every appendage to rank was supplied with that eager avidity which mark the favors of men at a certain period of life, to beautiful young women: his time, while in London, was wholly devoted to this new bauble;—silks, muslins, jewels, and laces, were the morning oblations, paid to this, his idol: his established, regular hours, were sacrificed at her shrine, and scarce could he prevail on himself to leave her at midnight.

This account almost petrified me; nevertheless, I had formed my resolution, and determined to be influenced by facts *only*, free from the prejudice of passion: I therefore waited his return, with a kind of determined impatience, I cannot describe.

On the eve of the second day after my agent left him, he arrived; when in the presence of my father, and Julia, I taxed him with the circumstances I have related, and demanded an explanation of his conduct.

Perhaps, my dear friend, you may think of this step, as I do myself, with some degree of censure; I own, my heart has frequently reproached me with a want of delicacy, a want of respect, for the pride of his spirit: my father has too much in his power, to be considered as an impartial judge; and perhaps, the confession I expected, was too great an humiliation to an independent spirit; at this period of the affair, I stand self-condemned; I feel my conduct was unworthy a daughter of the house of Ruthven, it was indeed disgraceful to philanthropy:—nor, I blush to say it, did I stop here; *my* whole part in the scene was degrading to my principles; and must have left an impression, that will help, for some time, to quiet the remorse, which General Moncrass will one day feel, on a retrospect of our love, and our parting: my father's resentment, if possible, exceeded mine; his tenderness, and always partial opinion of his only child, placed her in a rank of beings above the common order of women; he had always resented Neville's tyranny, and his particularities; but Neville actually adored his daughter; that unhappy man's unbounded fondness for me, contrasted with his own unamiable disposition, were perpetual sources of disquiet to himself, as well as misery to all about him; few men knew the world better: my unconquerable coldness filled him with distrust, not of my principles, but of my affection; but still, he considered me in the same partial light, as my father did.

What a scene then, was here opening for the Earl: he waited, with trembling impatience, for the General's answer; who hesitated, changed colour, and turn'd to the window.

His conduct was equal, in my father's opinion, to a confession of the most blameable nature:—no longer able to conquer his rage, he gave it vent in reproaches;

upbraided Moncrass with the indigence from which my fondness raised him, with the rebellious spirit of his family; the pains all mine had taken, to get him restored to his paternal inheritance; and the honor done him by our alliance: you will hardly believe it of me, Constance, but so much had the narrow passion of jealousy lowered me, I joined in my father's invectives, and proudly ask'd if his sick foreigner would, *or* could do as much for him as I had done.

Ah! Mary, replied he, after a long pause; why will you thus urge a temper, too like your own, to suffer indignity with forbearance:—My Lord, turning to my father, did I not venerate your age, and respect you as the father of Lady Mary; I should tell you, how infinitely a grateful spirit overpays all obligations;—it is a spirit never possessed by the mean remembrancer of past favors: and I am convinced, I feel for your lordship, what you could not for me, were we to change characters;—I could not upbraid my lowest dependant, as you have done me.—As to you, Lady Mary, you will one day be convinced of my *gratitude*, since you demand it.—

I despise your gratitude, Sir; I will not accept it:—if you would convince me, my peace is of the least importance to you, tell me the claims those women have on you:—her, at Mrs. De-Vallmont's in particular,—her, on whom you are squandering your fortune.—

How, Mary, interrupted he, have I then been watched? Have you descended so much from your own character, as to set spies on your husband's conduct?

The event justified the act, Sir:—

So it has, join'd my father.

Dear Madam, cried Julia, throwing herself at my feet, have patience; moderate your anger; the General will, I am sure, clear his own honor.

He raised the weeping girl to his breast.

My father sternely commanded her to retire: and then, addressing him in a solemn tone of voice:

General Moncrass, said he, you are called upon, by *my* daughter, once Lady Mary Ruthven, *now your wife*, for an explanation of your conduct:—It will not, in my opinion, admit of any; nevertheless, she has asked it; and I, her father, and protector, demand it.

I now saw the impropriety of my conduct in making the Earl a party to the business; he trembled with rage, and with a furious aspect, waited the General's answer.

After a solemn, and affecting silence, my husband turned to me; and taking my hand, intreated me to confide in his honor: do not, said he, seek to know what will strike at your dearest interest—believe me incapable of wronging you—Time will convince you.

So Constance, I was to forbear enquiries, because there confessedly, was *that* to know, that would wound my dearest interest; I was to sit tamely down, knowing my husband had a mistress, nor dare to ask what I should *grieve to know*; who, Constance, could bear this? was I not right at last, in telling him coolly, I would wait *that time*, before we met again? yes, there I feel I was myself, I acted consistent with my own character.

I hastily quitted the room with my father; the General retired to his apartment: the Earl's carriage was ordered, and we left Bath immediately.

Curtis remained to pack up our wardrobe; Julia's Alice only attended us:—you will conclude, I had a stronger reason for leaving my woman, than merely the care of our cloaths: Curtis is an observant and sensible woman; her constant attendance on my person, and having once been the only conversable female I was suffered to have about me, created a kind of friendship in me, which is repaid by her, with a faithful, and respectful attachment; my will is the rule of her actions, and I know her incapable of abusing my confidence.—She, of all our domestics, was the only person, who was acquainted with the occasion of our separation:—knew she would observe on the General's conduct, without any exaggeration.

Nothing, she says, could equal his surprize, when he found we were gone: Gallini rapp'd at his door, when dinner was served, and was answered without its being opened, that he was indisposed, and should not go down.

The faithful Swiss, has been as old, and respected a servant to him, as Curtis has to me: he ventured to ask if his master would have any thing served up in his apartment; he was bid not to be trouble-some; and the faithful domestic joined Curtis, both, with tears deploring our unhappiness. At nine he rang for coffee, and was then told we had left the house eight hours. Curtis was ordered up; he could not at first credit her, but was at length satisfied the fact was as they represented it: he immediately sat down to write a letter, and sent an express after us with it. The letter contained general professions of love and honor,—but not a syllable about his bauble at Madame De-Vallmont's: he has since sent others, but as they did not lead to a vindication, and as he declined entering on the subject of most consequence to me; I have now made up my mind, and do not open any letters from him.—

Made up my mind, Constance, did I say?—Oh no!—The barbed arrow lies there, rankling with the utmost malignity!—My person is, it is true, divided from him, but he still occupies all my thoughts, still masters every sense, and embitters every moment of my existence;—Oh that I could forget!

“The form so pleasing, and the heart so kind;
 “All pass before me in remembrance dear,—
 “Thought follows thought, and tear succeeds
 “to tear.”

Let me bury these mean follies deep in your bosom, and my own;—for, has he not, Constance, in defiance of all sense of honor, justice, and compassion?—Has he not thrown off the mask, and taken her home to his own house; given her my place at his villa?—He has carried her among his tenants, and lives a hermit, where he reign'd a prince. But vainly do the vicious fancy, they can hide themselves from the shame of a bad

act: "Fame, with its feet on earth, and head in the skies," will find out their secret recess, and drag them to public view. And, could he expect my wrongs would be openly known, and not as openly talked of, and resented?—But there he has his *favorite* all to himself; no visitors disturb his solitude; a few of the dissipated men, only, dine with him; and sensual observers speak highly of the beauty, and accomplishments, of the creature who presides at his table; Madame De-Vallmont serves as a convenient companion:—astonishing! that a woman, who through a series of unmerited calamities, maintained an irreproachable character, should accept of so humiliating a situation, as duenna to a kept woman;—but interest, the idol of mankind, was, no doubt, the bait.

As to our young hermit, I am as earnest to have him enter a world, where, I think, he will shine; as Mr. Montford or any of you can be:—and, altho' I have reason to resent General Moncrass's private treatment of me, no other person has; if therefore, Major Melrose has had the goodness to get him a commission; by all means, prevail on him to accept it: and, if you would get the counsellor to hint, how proper it would be for Harley to wait on the General, and return him thanks for his favour; he would, perhaps, give you an account of the manner they live in, nearer truth than any I have yet heard:—at the same time, my dear Constance, you must be careful not to mention this, as *my* wish, to him, or Mr. Butler; but if Mrs. Butler was to engage him in a particular correspondence, you would be able to tell me all he communicates to them, on the subject next my heart:—If you are shock'd at the meanness to which I stoop about this ungrateful man, you must love as I do, and be as wretched, before you can properly decide on the inconsistency, in the character of, dear Constance, your's ever,

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER V.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

London.

I AM, this instant, setting out on the circuit; have therefore only time to say, a commission lies ready signed for you, at the war office, and it is the hope of all your friends you will accept it; general Moncrass, who is now in your neighbourhood, is the founder of your good fortune; you may perhaps think it necessary to wait on him, and I am authorized by Lady Mary Moncrass to tell you: she will be particularly pleased, at every mark of respect you shew the General: she is very much gratified, by his remembrance of her recommendation; and advises you to cultivate his friendship, by every means in your power.

Adieu, dear Edward, Caroline bids you prepare a very smart uniform, in which she will introduce you to her circle, many of whose enquiries, after our hermit, are very flattering.

JAMES BUTLER.

LETTER VI.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

Dear James,

I AM much concerned, General Moncrass should have condescended to interest himself, in the fortunes of such an insensible being as myself: take the trouble to signify my concern to Caroline, for not giving her a beau brother, but the thing is out of nature;—If she would see me in my best attire, it must be at my hermitage, when I am decked out to receive her; seriously dear Butler, here I must vegetate, and I have fixed on the green sod, under which I mean to be laid. Adieu,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER VII.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square, London.

YOUR last letter greatly distresses me, and Caroline is inconsolable; it is needless to say, how dear you are to us both; the uncommon sweetness of your sister's disposition, the softness of her manners, and the infant attachment between you, may give the semblance of greater tenderness to her profession; but believe me Harley, her feelings for you, her solicitude for your welfare, cannot be stronger than mine—We were early united in the bonds of friendship; bonds, which death only I trust will break; from the time of our first acquaintance, when Lady Mary prevailed on Mrs. Montford, to suffer your tutor, to receive me under his care; to the period, when it was in some degree necessary, to change happy for wife; our studies, our pleasures, our sentiments, and pursuits, were the same; how comes it therefore Edward, we differ so much on a point the most essential to our future welfare?

A respectable ancient, compared life to the olympic games; where some ventured for glory, others for gain; *while* a third party, and those by no means the most contemptible, chose to be spectators; but it did not enter the head of the sage observer, that any would be added to those, who in full possession of mental, as well as bodily strength, could be content to exit, without action, or observation.

I have dedicated time, I can ill spare, from the business of my profession; to argue the matter coolly with you, Edward; and to draw from you, the real state of your situation, and inclination.

General Moncrass has obtained for you a commission in the army, which you refuse to accept:

Admiral Mizen offers you, his interest in the navy.

The Chancellor, in memory of family obligations, and the great respect he bore Mrs. Montford; wishes you to enter the temple, and go through the necessary gradations to qualify yourself, for *his* particular protection.

Mr. Montford, has purchased the next presentation to one of the best livings in England, where the incumbent is very old; on the idea, that your serious turn may induce you to embrace a sacerdotal profession; he has also kept his name, in the firm of the business, by which his own large fortune, has been accumulated; in hopes, that if you decline every other proposition; *that*, may at last tempt you, to shake off the lassitude of your disposition, and adopt a mode of life, the most pleasing to him.

Thus Edward, the army, navy, law, church, and trade; have been successively offered to your adoption.

We all lament your—what shall I call it, instability, or inflexibility: one, or other of those unamiable extremes, it certainly is; it is a reflection on your own understanding, and a source of perpetual disquiet to your friends; the tears of your adopted sister are ever flowing; oh Harley! how ardent is her friendship; she repines at the preference you give your inanimate favorites, to her society.

Mr. Montford, less delicate, and more severe; charges you with indolence of habit, and stupidity of ideas; he is grieved, and angry with himself for being so; but neither Caroline's tenderness, nor Mr. Montford's displeasure, comprehend half the misfortunes I foresee, from the inactivity of such a mind as yours.

As necessity is the mother of invention, so is idleness, the foundress of evil.

If you were a sportsman; your little fortune, would not only afford you the full enjoyment of your favorite amusement, but your extreme sensibility, would, like a large head of water, by being diverted into different channels, loose the power to overwhelm you with its force: and the exercise of the chace, would also contribute to the health of your body.

If the convivial circle, could allure you from your sequestered haunts; it would be a pleasure to reflect, that you enjoyed the society you liked, with more gout from your occasional retreats.

Were you a libertine, an epicure, or even a miser; still your mind having an object in pursuit, would be in less danger, than now: a young man filled with the purest milk of human kindness: the absolute son of sensibility: living in a state of apathy: retiring to solitude: shunning society: preferring the blushing sweets of a new blown rose, to the human face divine; and paying greater attention to the cultivation of his garden, than to the soul of man: oh Harley! it cannot last, you know not the precipice on which you stand.

Your bosom glows with benevolence, you diffuse happiness, and distribute charity; the children of poverty hail you as their patron: and the victims of sorrow, raise their feeble voice in prayers for their benefactor: you are bounteous to your labourers, and studious to reward the industrious; you are in short, a young uncle Toby; "for every man's misfortune, you have a tear, for every man's need, a shilling;" you look inward, where imagination is ever pleased; and backward, where conscience is ever still; and this you fancy, is the sum of earthly good: you dream not of the ties, which are actually necessary to your existence: No; you are the Adam, for whom the Creator never designed an Eve: you are out of the reach of passion; a stoic, a philosopher, a Diogenes at twenty two; what a reverse awaits you.

Your soul, Edward, is formed for tender connections; you have yet only *seen*, not *felt* beauty; the charming rustics of your village, can only attract the eyes, and yours, are in subjection to your mind; you are therefore invulnerable to them, but there are a sort of women, who are not so easily repulsed; whose looks, voice, and manners, steal into the soul, with such a welcome, such imperceptible craft, and so firmly fix themselves there, that nothing but annihilation can effect their removal.

The first female of this description you meet; who either is, or has art to persuade *you* she is, as sensible and as extravagant as yourself; will be your fate: and if so you are undone.

Your little fortune is insufficient, (without some exertions of your own) to support a family with comfort to yourself:—observe, I have not supposed the female whose chains you are to wear; will be a girl of fortune; that I conceive to be morally impossible; because such a one, will be taught higher maxims, than those, that will be congenial to your humble ones; and our women of fortune, from the ten pounds, to ten thousand; are early taught, the only just equivalent, is metal for metal; they have too high a sense of their own importance to pay any regard to the particular disposition of their husbands; *they* will not therefore, *really think* like you; and will not be at the trouble, of affecting to do so.

You are, if you marry a portionless wife; however amiable she may be, sure of encountering distress.

If you have resolution, to give up the woman of your heart; rather than involve her in your difficulties, you certainly save yourself a world of one sort of trouble; but how will you contrive, to free your mind, from the thousand fond regrets, which will fill it with the image of her you love? how bitter will be the recollection, that in rejecting the offers of your friends, you have also rejected, the woman you adore; that in condemning *yourself* to a life of joyless celibacy, you deprive *her* of every hope of happiness; and either be the cause of her giving her hand to a man, who has no share in her heart; or perhaps, consign her, the victim of secret sorrow, to an early grave.—

Well, is the matter settled? you will be a batchelor: look forward to the period of human misery; when the natural infirmities of age, are painful to the most happy, and most contented: when the sad hours creep on, flow, yet rapid: when every passing moment, is followed by a groan of anguish, and a sigh of regret; when your life will be burthensome to yourself, uninteresting to the world, and unuseful to society.

While the warm animated circulation of youthful blood, keeps its wonted current in your veins, and glows on your cheek; while you have health to take brown exercise, and create appetite; while the hilarity of your spirits, gives strength to your limbs; while you dare risk the mid-day heat, when the dog star reigns; the disappointment of your hopes, will be attended with a kind of melting, and not unpleasing woe; *that* have I borne, and *this* do I suffer, you will say, rather than make her wretched: you will feel the

impossibility of happiness without her, you will resign yourself to sorrow, you will find a luxury in sighing, and there are certain sensations of pleasure even in the tears of genuine passion.

But time, pain, weakness, imbecility, and your own solitary fire side; will remind you of many absentees, necessary to gild the going down of life.

The frigid how-dy'e of acquaintances, the lukewarm concern of friends, the important visits of distant relations, cousins of your last will and testament, the neglect of servants, the hard hand of a mercenary nurse, which opens with a thousand times more alacrity to grasp your gold, then gentleness, to wrap the flannels round your gouty legs; who sees with extreme fortitude, the near approach of your dissolution: but whose apprehensions are really serious, least any of the perquisites of her office should escape her, at the moment she anticipates your last groan: these will all speak to your feelings, in a language, pain, and petulance, will teach you to understand.

Do you like this portrait? or shall we reverse it? You marry the woman you love, you have a family—worse, infinitely worse.

Behold the wife of your choice, her, whose eye could glance you into rapture; see, it is humid, sunk, and all its lustre lost in care; her silent sufferings, call on every faculty of your soul, for tenderness, for relief, for indulgence; your purse is too light to afford either; you are wounded by her fatigue, you feel her groans, and your agonies increase, with the impossibility of alleviating her anguish, or of concealing your own.

Your girls, are all that beauty, and good sense, aided by the faultless example of their mother, can make them; but see, they retire to weep, their white bosoms heave with sorrow, and indignation: their homely, ill-bred neighbours, despise, and insult them; you fire at the affront, alas! your resentment is derided—your rage is impotent; *they are richer than you, their daughters have wealth, yours have only merit.*

Your sons are learned, sensible, and well-bred; but, they are nevertheless, doomed to encounter the proud man's scorn; they have to roll their stone up the steep hill, if they fail it is not them, it is their father.

I have wrote so much, and my mind is so engrossed, by the subject of my letter; that I, at this moment, actually fancy, I see you, surrounded, by a group of amiable children, circumstanced as I have described them; and am too much affected to proceed: dearest Edward, we join our prayers, our entreaties, be persuaded, come to us, make us happy.

JAMES,
CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER VIII.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

I Received your letter, my dear brother, with gratitude, and affection; and allow me to say, if not convinced by your argument, I am at least charmed with your eloquence.

I did not immediately answer it. I have been trying to new mould my disposition, and persuade myself to consent with grace, to the requisitions of my friends.

I have looked round my little boundary, and repeated your arguments to its harmless inmates; I have told the venerable oaks, the spreading palm, and the tall poplar; which have so long afforded me a most acceptable shelter from the mid-day sun: that tho' I am still sensible of their refreshing bounty, I am on the point of accounting them, totally useless, and invaluable.

I am writing now, on the verdant bank of the clear stream, where Caroline went through Tasso with me; undisturbed by ought but the murmurs, of a passing current, which supplies my table with fish, and from whence I quaff draughts of real nectar; I have considered, and reconsidered, how to be *wise*, and forsake the calm seat of sober contemplation.

I have put by my brown crust in great scorn, at the idea of feasting, most voluptuously, on your adulterated white; but it will not do, my soul involuntarily shrinks from the offered kindness of my prudent friends, while I feel their solicitude for my welfare, with gratitude unutterable.

But simply to say, I cannot be a man of the world, is not enough; the generous pains you have taken to convince me, I suffer in the opinion of judicious people, who accuse me of an obstinate adherence to error, or an unpardonable mutability, which prevents my fixing on any plan, merely from the variety your indulgence offers to my choice; calls for an explanation, and defence, of the motives which induce me to reject the advantages which appear to you, of so much importance.

General Moncrass, unsolicited by me, has procured a commission in the army, for a mortal, who treads with caution the winding paths of his little wood, least by an unwary step, he should put to death, any of the unoffending part of the creation; he selects for the destruction of the human race, a man who shudders at the necessity of destroying the most insignificant reptile, because his heart bids him reflect on the importance of that act, which tears the first gift of God, from its most humble possessor.

The General, thus appoints the son of peace; to the avocation of war; he puts the sword into a hand, that trembles at sight of human blood.

War is, according to the general system of politics laudable, and it may be sometimes, necessary; it is justified by examples innumerable, both in divine, and moral history, its sacred fire has animated heroes, whose fame, deluges of human blood, have rendered immortal; it has confessedly punished tyranny, and torn the usurper from the throne of the Lord's anointed; but, it has also widowed the sorrowing matron, and forever divided the distracted mother, from her bleeding infant; it has left the daughters of chastity, unprotected—in the hands of brutal violence; it has alienated right, it has sanctified wrong; but it has not power to make a soldier of Edward Harley:—yet I will thank the General for his well-meant kindness; I say well-meant, because it strikes me, he intended a compliment to Lady Mary; I know of no other inducement he has to serve *me*; he has been two months at Belle-Vue, and I have not even bowed to his Agnes, an omission I am astonished he can pardon.

Admiral Mizen, is Mr. Montford's friend on the old score of election interest, and he offers that to a man who has a borough, to sell, or give away, as shall best suit the interest of both parties; which he would refuse to a wounded veteran.

There was a time, when the honor of bearing a commission in the British navy, might excuse the young mind, for thirsting after the bloody banner of war: our Admirals were really brave, and they were consequently humane; they received their commissions, as the highest distinction, in the gift of an English prince; considering themselves, as entrusted with the bulwark of their country,—they were emulous to approve themselves, equal to the confidence reposed in them: the national glory, and the people's safety, were deposits equally sacred, and important. From the moment they entered their wooden worlds, they felt no animosity incompatible with their duty; whatever were the politics of the ministers, *they* remembered it was *their* unequivocal duty, to honor their king, and humble his enemies; to defend the dear bought rights of a free people, to preserve untarnished the glory of the British flag, and suffer no stain to rest on their own honor.

When our Admirals are of this description victory, follows our fleets; and an English seaman is a respectable being, where-ever he sets his foot; but were I inclined to enter the honorable corp, of naval heroes; I am too far advanced in life, to think of troubling Admiral Mizen.

The law is a respectable profession; many of the first geniuses of the age, give to, and receive honor from it; but none of the evils you so pathetically describe, would be prevented by my attainments in the law; you, my dear Butler, are one of its ornaments; your heart is as uncorrupted, as your head is clear; such a man as you, in the practice of the law is a general good; but it is nevertheless, the bane, as well as blessing of society; far from the humble roof, and humbler heart, of Edward Harley, be the advantages, and tumults resulting from law.

Forgive my sweet friend, dear Caroline forgive him, who would sacrifice his existence in your service; neither can he prevail on himself, to mount the sacred eminence, to stand between the Almighty, and his people, to preach virtues, he has not resolution to practice, to pocket the tenths of the poor, for the glory of God, to fence his own posterity from inconvenience, by the legal rapacity of power; can your adopted brother, him whose young idea was taught to shoot with yours, can he do this?

Have I talents, capacity, or inclination for trade? my more than brother, friend of my youth; suffer me here to breathe the sweets of content, peace, and benevolence; if I know so little, and you so much of my heart; if it is really destined to be the prey of passion; this much at least I may say, I will suffer alone; no hapless female shall be involved in my misfortunes; but why should I encounter real dangers, from ideal fears; life now glides on like a smooth unruffled current; winds may arise, black tempest darken the horizon, thunder may appal, and lightnings blast me: but, shall I, because such things may be, quit the soft bosom of serenity, *now*, while the bright sun is in its meridian, and I am lifted out of the ken of mortal fear, by the refulgence of his splendor: you must be here, you must not only see, you must feel like me, to know all my pleasures, to allow full weight to my arguments.

Do not fancy I am such an enthusiast, as to imagine, I am either in my own practice, or that of my rural neighbours, infallible; no, I know that among all mankind, there is a general mixture of good, and evil; the difference is this; in the great world, they are so unpropitiously blended, the lustre of the former, is nearly lost, in the more extensive influence, of the latter; so that the evil appears by far the most predominate.

But the case is reversed with us in the little world, we are ashamed of an immoral act, it is not as with you, lost in the monstrous mass of common events, we hear of it, from sun rise, to the setting of that glorious orb, it pursues us to our inmost recesses, and it is carefully remembered, for the purpose of calling a blush into the cheeks of our posterity; a matter so vexatious in the consequence, becomes disgusting in the act; illiterate people have more cunning (a quality which serves them instead of wisdom) than those of cultivated talents would imagine; except like me, they studied simple nature; they have too much saving knowledge, to barter an age of disgrace, for a moment's pleasure; but no state is free from error, all that short-sighted mortals can do, is to chuse that, which appears, least likely to destroy the seeds of honest rectitude, which God has implanted in all his creatures: I am convinced my tower of strength is at the hermitage, let it my dear Caroline be soon honored by your presence, it will then be elysium to your

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER IX.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

POH, poh, my dear General, what signifies mincing the matter; it is as plain to me, as the nose in my face: and that you will allow needs no elucidation, that a pair of sparkling eyes, shining over two cherry cheeks, aquiline nose, ruby lips, and small white teeth; have taken the fortress of your heart, drove out the lawful commander, and put near twenty years constancy to actual rout.—I hate mysteries, if there are any mischiefs concealed under them, why the sooner 'tis out the better; if there are not, let me tell you General, they are very foolish; what the duce is this girl with her foreign name to you? I am sat down to write in a very ill humour, I forewarn you of that—just come from Bath, where you have left impressions which will certainly send your honor to the d—l, if those same mysteries turn out as I expect they will: by the bye, I do not at all comprehend a system of benevolence that demands so great a sacrifice; I would with pleasure give a few hundreds myself, nay I would not flinch if it were a thousand or two, to relieve an innocent, beautiful, object of distress; mind I stipulate on beauty, the face of an ugly woman is I own with me a terrible damper of charity; a broad pock-marked countenance now for instance, with a copper coloured neck, and a pair of red fists, if your Agnes answered that description, confess, would her interest have been half so strong;—but if she were an angel, I have no sort of conception why my own peace, and that of those deservedly dear to me should be totally disregarded, for the sake of mitigating the misfortunes of others; nor can I penetrate the depth of that mystery, which portends greater distress to Lady Mary, than the alienation of her husband's affections; I say alienation, for if the interest and fortune of your protegèè, be of more importance to you, than the peace of your wife, that is the case gloss it over how you will;—to be sure, Lady Mary is some seven or eight and thirty. The beautiful Agnes has not numbered much above half those years—ergo—a chrystial tear, squeezed out of the corner of her black eye, speaks closer to the heart, than all the matronly wailings of her ladyship.

As I was at Bath, and the officious public, had announced me, I thought I could not consistent with common civility, and good manners, avoid making my bow in the Crescent; altho' upon my soul I was, so much, I was going to say, ashamed, of you, General, that I did not wish to be let in; contrary however to my expectation, the porter told me, my name was excepted in the general order to admit none but the physical tribe: so you see they had heard I was at Bath, and expected me to call.—Well—up I marched: as slow, and cautious, as if a mine had been ready to spring under my feet; 'till the drawing room door was thrown open.—

And now for the Dramatics Personæ:

On one side of the fire (the room was as hot as an oven;) sat Lord Ruthven, the leg, and arm which had been affected with the paralytic stroke, supported on cushions; his thick black brows drawn into a parallel line with his prominent nose, his mouth so entirely lost, between that leading feature, and his chin, that had it not been for a hollow grumbling sound, which dinn'd the ear with your name, and late exploits, it would have puzzled an anatomist to have discovered he had one: Lady Mary, whose nervous headaches (as she afterwards informed me) affected her eyes; (they were indeed *visibly affected*) was seated opposite her father; the curtains of the windows, except one where pretty Julia sat drawing, all let down; her ladyship amusing herself with that delightful exercise, vulgarly yclep'd "beating the devils tattoo."

Julia laid down her pencil, as soon as I entered, and took her station at the back of her mother's chair: Hem—hem—hem—how long I had been at Bath, the weather, the no company, and politics, were all attempted by way of introducing conversation, but after a monosyllable or two, the effort was given up.

At last—I made a bold push, and enquired for you; do you mean to insult us, Major Melrose? bellowed the old peer—kicking with his well leg, the cushion from his lame one, which Miss Neville flew to replace; insult you my Lord returned I with an affected surprise, which I meant should appear very natural, but believe I failed in the attempt; I really do not comprehend—uprose your divine rib, and with a majestic toss of her head, would have commanded Julia to follow her out of the room.

You know my weak-side General, I hate to be left by the women, there is certainly something very enlivening, in the pretty shrill sound of their voices; dear Lady Mary said I, taking her hand with unfeigned respect; what direful offence have I committed; there *was* a time when the name of Moncrass was a passport to your favor;—what can have happened in so short a period to occasion such a change?

Bating her pride, Lady Mary is, and bating her *age too*; the finest woman in England; her features glowed with indignation, she grew an inch taller—

Major Melrose this treatment is unworthy your character and sentiments.

In what respect Madam?

Let go my hand sir—if you really are ignorant of our situation, permit me to leave you; my father will explain to you, what it is death to me to think of; but, if, as I suspect, you are not, let me tell you sir, this triumph over domestic misery, is a very poor one; and she burst into tears.—

There was no standing this, I was blown to the devil General, I am always wrong, when I attempt any thing in the round about way; my forte is plain, unvarnished truth; so having faltered, and equivocated, 'till I was ashamed of myself; I fairly owned I *was* in the secret, and offered to confess all, on condition her ladyship would be re-seated; she very majestically performed her part of the treaty, and I as punctually fulfilled mine; so that if your worship had been tempted, as most of us young old fellows are, when a girl is

in the case, to gloss over any of your manoeuvres you would have been blown; but to do you justice their account exactly tallied with yours.

An aggravation of your sins—yes! faith we have heard of the arrival of your damoselle, and her gouvernante, at Belle-Vue, with all the editions, and additions, impertinent curiosity, and double tongued slander could invent.

The Earl was quite vociferous, Lady Mary struggled hard to conceal her tears, she was entirely endishabille, a white wrapper carelessly thrown round her—her hair undressed, and such a total abstractedness in her whole figure, from any concern in this wicked world; that I could not help considering her, as a fine *ruin*, on the point of falling into nothing; I felt myself strangely affected, and ventured to ask whether matters had not been carried on with too great violence?

Oh Major, answered she! (then giving way to her tears) if we grant they have, has it not been the violence of fond affection? I now appear to the world, and I doubt not to yourself, as an enraged jealous woman—I cannot deny the justice of the censure, those who remember me in the days of Mr. Neville, are astonished at such a reverse of character: had I regarded General Moncrass, as I did Neville—he too might have had his pleasures, without being troubled with my enquiries; it is the misfortune of my nature, that I cannot easily overcome prejudices I once imbibe—my fond imagination had decked Moncrass, in all the virtues, that could adorn a faultless being—and then the consciousness of my own unbounded love—

Talk of him no more daughter (interrupted the Earl) ungrateful—worthless—unprincipled—

Stay, my lord, cried I interrupting him in my turn—remember—the man you are branding with those dishonorable epithets *is my friend*.

That is not to your credit Major, answered he; with quickness.

I arose,

The Major my lord, said Lady Mary, is a friend to us all—he is a man of the world,—a man of gallantry—he cannot feel as we do on this occasion—allowance must be made for the privilege of custom and the prejudices of education.

Dear mamma, said Julia, (I shall adore that girl) and why is General Moncrass to be deprived of the indulgences, you are so willing to grant Major Melrose, how often have you said, there is no such thing as a perfect character?

Forbear, Julia, said Lady Mary with a severe look, you feel much for the General, and more for Reuben—how is it that your mother shares so little in your solicitude?

Because, said Julia, my mother will, “right or wrong,” be in a passion, and punish the innocent with the guilty;—now only think, Major, what cruelty; here is poor Reuben Moncrass, for no earthly reason in the world, that I know of, involved in his father’s disgrace; when, you know, if the General is guilty, which perhaps he may be, and perhaps not; Reuben would, in the end, be the sufferer, since to be sure, it must be a very uncommon attachment, that could have such influence over his father’s conduct.

How often, Miss Julia Neville, have my Mother, and myself, both forbid your naming that young fellow?

True, my Lord, and I have bit my tongue an hundred times in trying to obey you; but I assure you, when I am forbid to *talk* of him, I pay it off with thinking, so it's pretty much the same.—

Julia Neville, said Lady Mary, knitting her brows.

I cannot help it, Madam, if I were to be killed.

You will have more prudence, Julia, when you are Lady Morden.—

Lady Morden! exclaim'd I in surprise.

Yes Sir, said the saucy prattler, you know his Lordship I presume—but perhaps you do not know he condescends to drop his own ancient title, and is willing to take *our's*, with all incumbrances, not excepting *myself*;—Major, resuming her pencil, do you like my grandfather's choice of a husband for me?

Do you, Miss Neville?—

Oh no! I am determined not to accept it.—

And pray why so, Madam? said the Earl, almost choak'd with passion—

Because—because, glancing an earnest look at her mother, I do not think it is fortunate.

Julia, said Lady Mary, you know how much you displease me by talking in this manner to your venerable grand-father: *you* ought to be the last person to throw out a reflection that alludes to your own father.

Not when I am the principal sufferer.—

You a sufferer,—why pray Miss, what do you suffer? said the Earl.

A great deal my Lord, I am deprived of the only society I desire on earth, and bored to death with the love, and adoration of a man, who regards me, as much as I do him, which is little enough;—and in short, my Lord, if you teize me about Lord Morden, I will actually run away to Reuben, if he will receive me.

Oh—no doubt of that I dare say Miss, he is too well instructed to refuse you, while he thinks your father's fortune, and my estate, will follow your ridiculous choice,—but you are a ward of chancery, and if he dares receive you—there are laws:—

And, said Lady Mary gravely, if Reuben Moncrass is your choice—a mother's blessing shall be ever withheld from you; but I wonder how you have the confidence to talk in this manner before Major Melrose; except indeed, you mean it as an indirect message, to the son of *him* who has *injured me*.

I am extremely concerned, Lady Mary, (said I very seriously) that I am so unfortunate as to stand so very low in your ladyship's opinion:—

Forgive me, Major, a wounded spirit is very hard to bear; and to have my own and *only* child; one from whom I have every right to expect consolation, league with my enemies is enough to turn my brain.

Julia arose, and with more gravity than I thought she could assume—Major said she, I am grieved to have drawn by my volubility, such a censure on you; and believe me my dear mamma (kissing her hand) and *you* my honored grandfather, if I did not feel I was right, I could not be so pert; General Moncrass is not my mamma's enemy, I am sure he adores her; and I have a presentiment *all* will be right yet; but in the mean time, here you drive on, and in *revenge* to him, I must be made the sacrifice; don't you talk of Lord Morden, and I will not say any thing of Reuben; I know I want four years of being of age,

and to tell you the truth 'tis well I do—for the forbidding me to see Reuben, makes me so weary of every thing else, that, I sometimes think a bold stroke in some of us, would set *all* right.

I was much hurt at Lady Mary's hint; and could not immediately reconcile myself to the mean suspicion it implied; however on recollecting, that anger has some privileges, and grief more: I suffered it to pass—and resumed the conversation, from the part of Miss Neville's speech, that alluded to you.

I begged to be considered, as Lady Mary had truly represented me, the general friend of the family; and added, I was sure matters must have been aggravated, or misrepresented; I would venture to stake my honor, and every thing dear to me, as a man, and a soldier, on the affection of my friend for his amiable, and accomplished wife; and faith General, I found myself in a vein to be very eloquent, had my cleverness been encouraged; but the Earl cut me short, by asking me, whether you had requested, or knew of my interference?

I answered him you did not:

Let me ask you Major said your Lady—do you not know—he has a woman—the *very woman* in keeping at his house?—

I was silent,

You *do* not answer me—you cannot.

Pardon me madam, I have heard from the General himself, he has a young lady under his protection, but he assures me she is a woman of honor—

Ah Major, what then are the ties which bind him to her? or why are those kept secret from *me*? if my *peace* is concerned, if his reserve, (no matter how laudable his motives) destroys my quiet, can any thing excuse it? I will suppose this girl to be his natural daughter, or some near relation; have I evinced so contracted a mind? is my heart so narrow, that it will allow no room for a person justifiably dear to my husband? Oh Major, the very supposition is an injury; then so circumstanced; I appeal to the generosity of your own heart, whether my demands are not reasonable; I only ask to have the woman given up, to be provided for by *me*—and to be made acquainted with the nature of his connection with her.

We men madam, do not perhaps in all points, judge exactly like the ladies; there may be something in giving up, and telling tales, not perhaps consistent with our *notions* of *honor*.

Nothing less by G-d interrupted the Earl, shall be accepted—

What, not if he resigns the lady to her own connections, and engages to give her entirely up, never to see her more?—

Oh you divine man, cried Julia, running up to me, and I verily believe the little witch would have kissed me had I encouraged the motion, but I am too modest General, I only took her hand, and with a countenance that did not speak my feelings if it was not full of earnest anxiety; repeated the proposition.

And what security will General Moncrass give, said the Earl ironically, that he will not again part with his wife for this pretty bauble?

I was again hurt—I arose and took my hat—

Lady Moncrass also arose—you are not Major you say authorized, to make any proposal, on the part of General Moncrass?

No madam, but my regard for my friend, and my respect for your ladyship, would carry me great lengths; I am not even sure I could prevail on the General to—

Enough sir, enough—interrupted she with resentment, her face in a glow, and curtsying as she retreated to her chair.

Miss Neville gave me her hand, God bless you Major said she, I suppose we see *you* no more, every thing worth living for is banished this house; the Earl began to rebuke the open-hearted girl, and I heard them at high words as I descended the stairs.

Now as I said before, the retrospect of this visit, leaves me in a very ill humour; the old Earl is an oddity, but he is a man of strict honor; has lived to a good old age, wrapped up in this his darling daughter; and therefore must feel her distress, and faith 'tis a pity, the old grecian one half gone as he is by disease, should not carry the other heart, whole to his grave: then Lady Mary actually is, one of the *best* as well as one of the finest women in England of her years; few women in any age, or country, ever gave such proofs of affection, as she has done for you; and 'tis plaguy hard to dismount her off a hobby-horse, which has cost her so dear; at a period of life too, when civility to a fine woman, is the more acceptable; as she knows, if she has any sense at all, she is daily decreasing in the attractions, that with our wicked sex, tell to more account, than either goodness, or virtue: as to Julia, her mother's authority is so weakened, by this division in the family, there is not the remotest hope, she will ever return to that implicit, and respectful obedience, which was once so amiable in her: so here is the peace, and perhaps future weal of one of the first families in the kingdom, destroyed; for God knows who, from God knows where, and nobody knows for what; do my dear General act a little like other men; marry the girl to your Chaplain, and go back to your wife.

I called in Soho yesterday morning, expecting to meet your philosopher at Butler's; but found to my surprize, the commission lay dormant; Mrs. J. Butler, (I did not see the old dowager) blushed and stammered an excuse for her brother, as she called him, the meaning of which I take it is, the fellow is a milksop and won't fight; so I think the wisest step you can now take, is to get him into orders, and make a match, between *him* and your Agnes.

The reviews will continue all the summer, so that, except you come to London; I shall not see you 'till I make war on the partridges, in the neighbourhood of Belle-Vue.

Adieu dear General, I would give half my fortune, you were quietly settled with old sour crout, and Lady Mary in the Crescent.

MELROSE.

LETTER X.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

WHY do you not let me hear from you my dear friend? have I been so unhappy as to offend you mortally? you sensibly afflict me, by depriving me of your correspondence; is the desire of living to myself, and to you only, an unpardonable offence; I know, and feel the goodness of your intention; you would have me happy, your way, I am obstinate, and chuse to be so my own; the end in view is precisely the same, we only differ in the means to attain it; you think yours are the most infallible, but if I am content, *that* is happiness to *me*; can I be better than well?

Were you to witness the serenity in which my moments pass,—the exultation I feel, when from my little store, I supply the necessaries of life, to the honest labourers, who by affliction, or sickness are rendered incapable of earning them; when I confer a favor, which dispels the starting tear, and, when at the close of the day, I reflect, tho' my power is limited, I have not suffered one call on benevolence, and humanity to pass unregarded; you might smile at my simplicity, but could not condemn it; let me describe to you, my situation at this moment.

I am seated in my wind chair, betwixt the two large elms on the brow of the hill; a glance only of the Hermitage is visible, through the foliage of the avenue; our grove, Caroline, is in such beautiful perfection, that the luxuriant arrangement of the trees, although they are the spontaneous growth of all bountiful nature, appears to be the work of a skilful artist; the river which is hid by the woods, 'till it has passed by them, seems to break out under the hill; and gradually expands into grandeur, and beauty, as it majestically advances; enriching the neighbouring meadows, 'till one part of its divided current, makes a welcome way through the valley below, while the other, laves the delicious banks of Belle-View park and gardens, which hang directly over it; and onward continue to diversify the charming picture before me, 'till lost between the two high hills, which bound the enchanting prospect: the sides of the rich vale are covered with cattle, grain, and forage; the trees seem to assign a proud boundary, to the different farms; the quickest hedges are in their gayest livery, and their feathered inhabitants, are straining their little throats, in the most harmonious concerts:

Nearer home, on my own demesne, this view delightful as it is, is eclipsed, both in beauty and utility; four honest men, three women and about a dozen children: who are all fed from my little stock, are sitting on the grass; happy by my means, and content with my bounty; the men are my constant labourers, and it often happens as in the present instance; I am told, what a main deal of good help, the women are at a pinch!

My rich neighbour, Mr. Thrift, complains much of my simple disposition, and thus he argues; you give way to those wretches, they prey on your easy temper, you keep up the price of labour, and are continually imposed on; if I had your land I would make double the money of it.

Double the money, what should I do with it? as we walk to the field, the story goes on, the song is concluded; they are however not so easy at sight of my companion, they rise with an awkward, stiff kind of respect, of which he takes no sort of notice, the children creep off, and their mothers follow; but Mr. Thrift is no sooner removed, than all is well again; they know my heart is among them; they apply to me on their disputes, my important decision is made, from which they have no wish to appeal; the children hang round me, a poor palsy-headed old dame assures me, when she is gone, my affairs will not be half so well managed, because if my honor remembers, she always forewarned me of change of weather, whereby, thos 'squire Thrift would skin a flint stone, his harvest was never half so well got in as mine; another old soul tells me marvellous things of her darlings darling; as how she always prayed for me, without bidding, after grandame, and as how, if I would but ask her, what H stood for, she would answer of her own accord Harley.

Ay, ay, cries Mr. Thrift, but will all this palaver go to market; and so in other words say my friend and his Caroline—but yonder comes a love-lorn maiden, whose slow, unequal pace, and averted looks speak inward woe; her straw hat is drawn over her eyes, and the coloured handkerchief on her neck is wet with her tears; poor girl! she advances, slow and timid, and now her wistful eyes are raised through her tears to mine—I cannot suffer her to feel her inferiority, grief levels all distinction; poor damsel! I have been imperfectly told thy story, but I will hear it again from thyself,

* * * * *

A victim to the tender passion—I am going, Caroline, to give you a love-tale.

Patty Lucas, of the mill, the lass; Hodge, of the green-lane, the swain.

Hodge kept company with Patty, two years last lammas, and promised to marry none but she, and broke six-pence besides swearing on the bible; but lammas-eve was fatal more ways than one to poor Patty, for Hodge being at a neighbouring wake, was ticed, unbeknown to Patty, to take the under-groom's place at Belle-View; for Hodge wanted to see the world.

* * * * *

Well, so rapid were Hodge's improvements in the world, that the second visit he paid at the mill, he had acquired knowledge enough to take advantage of the innocent creature's fondness; and Patty's apron-strings are now an infinite deal too short.

Well child, said I, and what can I do for you? I suppose you hate the fellow who has ruined you.

Oh dear me, no sir!—what, hate Hodge!—no, I only hate that huge white house, and every soul a’thinside on’t; an its had’nt been for the Lunnun sarvants there, Hodge would ne’r a broke his promise;—Oh dear sir, that Lunnun is a pest’lent place! and sitch words as poor Hodge has larnt among ’um!—dear heart, why a makes nothing of swearing, and telling of lies!—Oh, if your honor would but be so good as to speak to Madam Agnes, she would bag the Ganeral to bid Hodge to make me an honest woman, afore father and mother noed on it.

I promised to try my influence at Belle-Vue, and I mean to keep my word;—not indeed by speaking to Madam Agnes; but I have not yet waited on the General, to thank him for the honor he conferred on me, in procuring the commission; the trouble he was pleased to take, well deserves that compliment, and perhaps, an apology too, for declining to accept it: I shall take the opportunity to mention poor Patty, and her broken six-pence; I may then also, probably, see this Agnes—not that I have the least curiosity about her; she is well spoken of by the few who visit at Belle-Vue, but they are few indeed; that delightful villa, which last year was the resort of all the fashionable people in the county, is now almost as great a solitude as my hermitage:—something in that, Caroline, resembling primitive virtue; when the habitations of those, who live in open defiance of her precepts, are thus deserted; the General is said to be in ill health, and the Lady is very prudent, or very politic; she neither *has not* or *affects not* to have any wish out of the vicinity of Belle-Vue;—but the merits of women of her cast, are of too levelling a quality, one is rather mortified than pleased, to hear of any particular propriety in their conduct; it too much conciliates the extremes of good and evil.

I remember being much hurt once at Belle-Vue, when I accompanied Mrs. Montford thither: among other topics of conversation, the Duke of B—’s mistress was spoken of as a domestic woman, a fond mother, a warm friend, a placable enemy, and the lady-bountiful of his village.

A very ordinary woman, Lady C—, was present, who seldom saw her own children, lost all her ready-money at play, and contracted debts with the neighbouring tradesmen for necessaries; whose whole heart was so lost in the vortex of fashion and dissipation, she had neither time or inclination to be a friend to any human being; yet, on the single merit of her chastity, which perhaps, might not in her, be a *merit*; how did she toss her well-dress’d head in scorn, as all the other different virtues, that could adorn the female character, were ascribed to the Duke’s companion: on such occasions one feels too much for the mistress, too little for the matron, and it was a supreme pleasure to me that Lady Moncrass was present; that I could turn my eye from the severe Lady C—, to her; were it not that there are *some* women, who are literally the jewel of their husbands; who in these days of tolleration would have courage to marry? and will Caroline pardon me, if I venture to give it as my opinion, that the free manners of some women, and the unamiable ones of others, have a baneful influence on the principles of the men; for “As

men govern Rome, so the women govern the Romans” and a modern author tells us, that, “If every lady were attentive to the morals of her lover, a libertine would be an uncommon character,” this is what I call, one of Colman’s best things; and should be inscribed, were I of consequence to enforce a law for the ladies, over the toilet of every pretty woman in the kingdom, Adieu,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XI.

Mrs. Butler to Mr. Harley.

Soho-Square, London.

AND must I indeed Edward, give up the sanguine hopes my fond heart had formed, of seeing my beloved brother, as valuable, and respected in public life, as he is in private; as much honored for the amiable disposition of his mind by the world, as by his Caroline; will nothing prevail on you to relinquish your rural attachments? shall I never live nearer my Edward? will two hundred miles always separate us? if I must submit to this hard fate; if I must give up my wishes, if you can indeed be no where happy but at your Hermitage; then my dear brother let it be on one condition.

Your last letter charmed us, I am impatient to hear the sequel of Hodge and Patty's amour, your reception at the Castle, your opinion of the celebrated Agnes; but above all, to read from your own ingenuous account, how you employ yourself; and this will (my James says) not only bring us mentally oftener together, but agreeably fill your time—the little hurry of finishing by the hour of post, the expectation of letters, and punctual correspondence; are he says the most pleasing avocations of a country life: will you promise brother, to keep a journal of your actions; and faithfully remit it to your friend and sister? we will be indulgent to your faults, should we perceive any; and do full honor to the virtues we know you possess: you will have the advantage of remarks, and advice, from cooler heads, if not wiser ones than your own; as the person immediately under the impression of passing events, or the dominion of passion, cannot so well judge of the *proper*, as those who see them only on paper: my heart is set on this matter, you will not have the cruelty to disappoint your friends in every request they make; we will consider your two last letters as a beginning, and arrange them accordingly; and who knows but some time hence, we may publish your letters, under the title of the “Young Hermit” or, if all the dismal prognostics, from your falling in love come to pass: perhaps the “English Werter,” tho' heaven forbid! you should resemble the German in fate; I know not how I came to fix on that Novel, it is my aversion—it is like Rousseau's Eloisa, a very bad story—divinely told—so far indeed, if my brother is the relator his history will be sure to resemble the German Novel.

Adieu my dear brother, I am out of patience, no travelling one while for

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER XII.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

WHAT can I refuse to the request of my sweet sister? is there a thought in my heart, I would conceal from her, or a wish her pure mind may not inspect? yes Caroline you shall know more than my actions, their motives shall also be laid before you; yet when that is done, what amusement will the events of a life, you style tame and insipid, afford you?

You will expect adventure.

I shall have none to relate,

For when I have told you I am up with the lark, watch the rising of the glorious sun, saunter by my quickest hedges, give and receive the good-morrow of the cottagers, chat with old Rawlinson about things which happened sixty years ago, who never fails to marvel the Rector will not leave his bed earlier, because that exercise, is better than physic; hear Benson's dreams while she makes tea, which are ever full of wonderful omens concerning her dear young lady, out when the morning repast is ended, round my farm, hear the news of the day, from the labourers, with their comments thereon, it is true the plough, or the spade stand still the while, but they are chearfully resumed, as soon as I leave them, with a, God bless our master; perhaps I invite company home to diner, you Caroline, would not chuse should spoil your carpet; then read, or take my violoncello 'till the cool of the evening, when I walk to the green, and join the rural amusements there; I say Caroline when I have told you this, with the very trifling variations, occasioned, by alteration of weather, or paying an important visit at the parsonage; I have given you a diary of my life; and these, with a few rustic anecdotes, will form the whole substance of the correspondence you so warmly desire: but, as

“Friendship gilds every object on which she shines,” and as you in the centre of gaiety, and entertainment; condescend to accept my humble tribute of affection, I chearfully obey your commands;

The amour of Hodge, and Patty, are exactly in the same situation as when I wrote last; except that Patty has been so unfortunate as to attract the notice of Mrs. Swamp, whose natural aversion to handsome hussies, is greatly increased, by some propensities to gallantry, which it is whispered she discovered in the Rector, during his late excursion to Bath.

Mrs. Swamp no sooner cast her malignant eyes on the damsel's waist, than she recollected the Miller's wife was lame, and that it would be a charitable act in her, to look in on the poor woman; now 'though dame Lucas had really been an invalid almost a year, Mrs. Swamp's charity had lain dormant, 'till her resolution to direct the mother's tearful eye, to the same improving object, which had attracted her own, carried her to the mill.

The poor dame communicated the matter to her husband—Patty was immediately called to trial—pleaded guilty—and suffered the torture of Mrs. Swamp's invectives, her father's anger, and her mother's tears—

The outcry raised in the village by the virtuous Mrs. Swamp, and the enquiries thereon, from the overseers, have so much affected both the miller's wife, and daughter, that they are as unable from indisposition, as from shame to be seen abroad; and I am not in credit with myself, for postponing my application at Belle-Vue, in the girl's favor; I am therefore going there immediately, and will write the success of my journey, before I close this letter.

* * * * *

It was late last night when I left Belle-Vue, and I confess notwithstanding my prejudice, I returned with very different sentiments of General Moncrass: than what I carried with me there.

Mrs. Montford's lingering illness, which confined her the two last years of her life, prevented her visiting at Belle-Vue, as frequent, as she had always before done; Lady Mary often came to the Hermitage, by which means I had the honor to be very well acquainted with her ladyship; although I was hardly personally known to the General; It is true, Caroline, and I, both sometimes attended Mrs. Montford, prior to her illness, on the public days to Belle-Vue; yet as there were generally, a large mixed company on those occasions, it was no wonder, such a mere youth as myself, should be nearly overlooked; or that my own attention, should be engrossed more by the multitude, than an individual, to whom I had only been formally introduced.

General Moncrass is however a very agreeable man, so much so, that I thought several times in the course of the day, next to being Edward Harley of the Hermitage, I could like to be General Moncrass; to have just such a heart, so noble, so expanded, so alive to the feelings of humanity; so attentive to the claims of justice, and mercy, so generous, so charitable, so abundantly possessed of the means to be so; and in short, so every thing he is, except the faithless husband of Lady Mary, and the lover of Agnes; if there were many such men in the world, it would certainly mend—

I appologised for not waiting on him earlier, with my grateful acknowledgements, for the honor he had done me:

I had rather young man, replied he, you had accepted it without any acknowledgement, but perhaps, he added, with a benevolent smile, you have thought better, and are come to inform me, you will yet be a soldier—

I bowed, with a negative air, he perfectly comprehended; and entered on the story of the Miller's daughter.

Good God! said he the tear starting in his eye, how easy are the progressions to vice, and how callous does it render the heart of man.

Hodge was ordered to attend.

The fellow, sister, who was a few months ago one of the most sheepish, shamefaced boobies in the parish; is now a compleat, audacious livery servant; he cast a look of incorrigible impudence at me, and heard the charge against him, with a smothered grin on his countenance—

The General condescended to recapitulate the injuries he had done the girl, and her family; he painted with equal truth, and justice, the ruined peace, lost character, and deplorable situation of the unhappy female, whom, artless love for him, had deprived of every other comfort and insisted on his making all the reparation, now in his power; you shall marry the young woman added he—

The fellow had been in *the world*, it was not for him to be concerned, at ruining an innocent girl, nor at any of the consequences, so pathetically described by his master—

Marry her, I hope your honor won't insist on that,

Why so sirrah, did you not promise to marry her? promise, oh, please your honor, if I did, that won't argusy; to be sure when I knoed no better, I mought say a few civil things—*civil things sister!! there's improvement!* but that was when I worked at the mill; but now please you, its quite another guess matter, because as why, if every gentlemen's sarvant, was obliged to marry girls, becace they promised, why lord love your honor it could not be, for a man mought be hanged; for whereof he'd ha more wives than hairs to his head, and that I dare say, his honor Mr. Harley knoes is against the gospel, and your honor knoes 'tis against the law—

The General was enraged, and gave orders if he did not agree to marry the girl, he should be instantly discharged; he chose the latter, and set off the moment he was paid his wages, (fearing I suppose the parish officers) for London; where, if his further improvements are as rapid as those at Belle-Vue, it may be presumed, it will not be long, before he reaches the summit of preferment—

My heart sunk within me, when I reflected on the consequences of the wretches barbarity; the poor girl, her situation, her honest father, and sick mother, with all their sorrows about them, rushed on my mind; the shame, and consequent misery of an hitherto admired, and virtuous maiden; struck me the more forcibly, as I knew her fondness for her destroyer.—

The General lamented his inability to enforce, either justice, or relief, to the injured sufferer, observing with truth, that marriage would not from such a fellow, have ensured her tolerable treatment; as it was too probable, her deviation from virtue, would be punished by the reproach, and abuse of her seducer; that her present situation, wretched as it was, would submit to time, but a bad husband was an incurable evil.

He pressed me to dine with him; he would introduce me he said, to a very elegant female, whose beauty was her least perfection; and whose mind, was as ingenuous as my own.—

I accepted the invitation, but eager as Caroline is for a description of his Agnes, I must first be permitted to give you the observations I have made on a nobler subject; the General himself.

He is then, as you know, a very fine figure, and has the perfect deportment of a gentleman; the brilliancy of his eyes when you saw him, had perhaps suffered from time, but they are now also fraught with a melancholy, which gives a most interesting turn to his countenance; yet he has a lively affability, the result of that politeness, which Bruyere describes as “a certain care by our manner, and words, to make others pleased with *us* and with *themselves*;” he is the only person in whom I ever saw, the gaiety of youth, so happily blended with the experience, and wisdom, of age, as to preserve entire the respect due to the latter, while the senses are captivated with the fascinating vivacity of the

former; his conversation thus tempered, cannot but be rational, and entertaining; his wit is good sense enlivened, and his heart, which a child might read, is the seat of generosity and sensibility—the tear dropped from his manly eyes while I recited the history of Patty Lucas, and the tribute to sensibility, he neither attempted to conceal, or display; but suffered it to take its course, regardless of what comments might be made, on an exhibition so unusual.

It was a just observation of Mrs. Montford, (but when indeed did that dear woman make an unjust one) that gentlemen, who have been used to military command, always preserve a kind of despotic authority over their servants, and the male branches of their family, while they are in the same proportion, more gentle, and indulgent, even to the frailties of their females, than is generally met with among the civil departments of society; General Moncrass has all this, but tho' absolute, he is no tyrant, his commands must instantly, and unequivocally be obeyed; but then they are dictated by reason, and are necessary to good order—you know it is the master who speaks, more from the alacrity with which he is obeyed, than the stern manner of giving his orders; he has one faithful domestic, who is grown old in his service; whatever subordinate offences are committed in the family, are tried in the form of a court martial, where this grey-headed veteran presides; whose sentence is always definitive—

I am, said the General, so satisfied with Gallini's principles, as well as acquainted with his good sense, and have had withal, such abundant proofs of the gentleness, and compassion of his nature; that I dare trust him with the last thing, a wise master will part with to a servant—*which is power.*

We were at this period of a very agreeable conversation, when dinner was announced; and the General led the way, through the elegant suite of apartments, into the eating parlour; where as the table was already covered, I was introduced with very little form to miss, or as he chuses to call her, Mademoiselle De Courci; there was a delicacy in the arrangement of the seats, which in respect to the absent *real* lady of the house, pleased me: the dining table is round, and the covers were so judiciously placed round the epergne, it is impossible to say, which was the head of the table; except indeed, that were to be determined by the place where the lady was seated; there was also at table a middle aged well-bred lady, Madame De Vallmont; a very sensible, respectable woman, who lives on terms of friendship with Miss De Courci; of the latter, I could not but observe, she conducted herself with such a marked propriety, such a collected, invariable delicacy; that had I not been acquainted with her character, I should have thought her, the quintessence of elegant simplicity.

“Blushing, said Diogones, is the completion of virtue,” and Pythya decided, that to be the most beautiful color, which modesty raises in virtuous persons; what the sensations are which causes the sparkling blood, to mantle in the cheeks of Miss De Courci, is perhaps not so easy to determine; certain it is the effect is enchanting; she is really a woman, whose charms, would justify any excess of virtuous fondness; and it is no wonder the General having once reconciled himself to the enormity of his first error, should be gratified in such an apology for his perseverance in it, as is seen in the sweet countenance of Miss De Courci.

He is certainly excessive fond of her, but again I say, did I not know the contrary; I should conclude from the manner of both, that it was the fondness of a tender father, repaid by the filial love, and gratitude, of a sensible amiable daughter: several times my dear Caroline during the day, pleasing as it passed in other respects, did I secretly, and painfully regret, the partial pleasure which beamed on the General's countenance, when ever he addressed, or was addressed by Agnes—had not Lady Mary for its object; I am grieved to say it, but all hopes of weaning her husband from his present attachment, is vain; I have given you the outlines of Agnes De Courci, but there remains undescribed, a myriad of charms, and those not merely personal; you would be ready Caroline to weep over such a wreck of virtue, and lament with me, she is not *all* perfection—

And thus, having so far performed the task you gave me, I have a return to ask from you.

I am but very superficially acquainted with the former events of the history of General and Lady Moncrass; they are, I have heard extraordinary; the last are no less so, and my visit to Belle-Vue yesterday, has raised a curiosity I am desirous to have gratified: the inconstancy of a man of fashion, and his separation from his wife; are things so common in the great world, that excepting the interest I took in Lady Mary's distress, I heard of it without a sensation of wonder, or desire to be acquainted with any more of the story, than what common fame conveyed to my Hermitage; but now that I have seen the General, and find him so near my standard of what man *should be*; one instance only excepted, I wish also to hear, all that *can be known* concerning him; suffer me to owe this pleasure to your elegant pen my dear sister, let me travel with you through those progressive scenes, which at present terminate so much to the discredit of human nature;—Alas poor human nature!

I was the messenger of liberality from Belle-Vue to the mill, dame Lucas's lameness is thought to be incurable; Patty, who is the eldest child, supplies to the rest, the place of the sick mother, and is also the notable mistress of the dairy; she was bathing her mother's lame leg when I entered; in as gentle terms as possible, I told her the success of my embassy, she heard me with tolerable fortitude, 'till I concluded; when finding that Hodge was gone, never perhaps to return, she gave a piercing groan, and repeating his name, sunk lifeless at her mother's feet; whose shrieks soon brought her husband from the mill; and assisted by two or three female neighbours placed the poor girl on a bed, where she lay 'till the appearance of death was removed, by violent and convulsive hysterics.

I endeavoured to comfort the parents, and pacify the children, with whom I had hitherto been a great favorite, but who now eyed me with no small malignity, as the herald of misfortune to their mammy sister as they called her, but did not succeed; I left the house unable to alleviate their sufferings, or repress my own feelings.

Caroline what shall we say to these things, the thunder of the Omnipotent, is not heard, the lightnings flash not seen, nor the unerring vengeance of the Almighty dreaded; while the guiltless, and unsuspecting, become the victim of deceit and barbarity; the betrayer triumphs in the success of his cruelty, and the poor unoffending innocent, sinks under woes, inflicted by the hand it loves, even in death; whose fell stab it met with unapprehensive joy.

When man was first created, all the other faculties, mental, and external, were crowned with heavens best last gift, reason.

Love, gratitude, truth, compassion, and fidelity; might well, and naturally be expected to associate with reason,—

But whence came deceit, falshood, cruelty, and foul ingratitude? how were they admitted into the seat of reason?—Oh Caroline with such impressions on the mind, there would be no end to reflection; nor any comfort to be derived from it, except that “the brink of the grave is the bulwark, where the remaining evils of life are accumulated, but beyond it is an eternal calm.”

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XIII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Lady M. Moncrass.

Soho-Square.

STILL unable to attend my dear cousin personally, I flatter myself she will believe, the greatest consolation I can receive, under my misfortune, is to have it in my power to serve, or oblige her.

Yes! Lady Mary, I too well know your fondness for the ingrate, to doubt the distraction of your mind; and however ready you may be to take blame to yourself, I well know when ever passion has been predominate, from what source its excess has arisen.

Good God!—when I look back—when I compare the past with the present, I could credit no other pen but your's; the narrative you have favoured me with, is so utterly unaccountable, so out of all possible comprehension, that I can hardly believe it real.—

Ungrateful man! And is it indeed thus our weak sex are rewarded for inviolate faith, and fondness unspeakable?—

Yes madam! it is indeed too true, all is confirmed by young Harley: I inclose the copy of his letter to Mrs. Butler, you see—but I have not patience—a man at his time of life, his character—but it is a privilege the lords of the creation will monopolize; they contend that the right to render themselves conspicuously ridiculous, without fear, or shame, is the character of their sex—would that were all—that *they* were the only sufferers—And oh! my dear friend, would to God, that the conviction of your husband's baseness could restore your tranquility.—

Oh! no doubt, we shall hear much more of the paragon of Belle-Vue; set a young fellow once going, in praise of a chit with a round face, if the nose be not preposterously misplaced, if she can see, and has a tongue, he will find a pleasure in his own description, and not easily give it up—God forgive me!—I wish a most precious punishment to the General; but I dare say the creature knows better; else, an elopement with our philosopher, would, in my opinion, expiate all the rest of her sins; and I suppose they are a decent catalogue.

Surely, Lady Mary, Julia cannot, after the treatment *you* have received, think of Reuben with her usual partiality; you are certainly right in giving her to Lord Morden; he is not, I grant, so well spoken of in point of morality, as one would chuse, but *your* sufferings are inflicted by a *moral man*; a libertine may dissipate his fortune, and injure his family—but I defy him to stab a woman to the heart, as our *moral man* has done: I do not however; mean to imply, that Lord Morden is a libertine; he has, it is said, indulged

himself in some tonish freedoms—What young man of fashion has not? he may not make the worse husband for that; Julia is handsome, lively, and sensible; *her* fortune, as *you* will take care to settle, it will be a bond for kind treatment;—at any rate, she must not be a Moncrass.

You observe the request Harley makes to my daughter; I think he must be obliged; we shall further engage, not only his interest, but his curiosity: as he becomes more acquainted with your Ladyship, he will feel for your distress, and wish to discover the secret motives which could influence the General to act as he has done; these he will naturally communicate; so that, if not forbid by you, I shall furnish Mrs. Butler with materials for your history, which she is impatient to begin.

I cannot help smiling in the midst of my anger, to think how little these young people suspect this fine corresponding scheme, which they fancy is to pourtray every action, is a contrivance of two old tabbies, as my saucy son would call us; and who, if he knew our plan, would pay very little respect to our desire of prying, by his friend's mean's, into the secrets of Belle-Vue; what most justifies the duplicity, (if it may be so called) in us is, that if Harley knew the use made of his letters; or, if Caroline had the remotest suspicion they were communicated to your Ladyship; one would not write, nor the other communicate *all* we wish to see.

Mrs. Butler now grows so important in her size, and so urgent in her entreaties for me to continue with her, 'till her apprehended hour is past; that after having been long a tender nurse to me, she would complain, and I think with reason, if I refuse her: I shall by that time I trust, have regained strength, to enable me to undertake my journey to you.

Heaven be your comforter, my dear friend; summon, I beseech you, your excellent understanding to your aid; let not the perfidy of *man* triumph over the friend of

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER.

Lady Mary Moncrass to Mrs. Dowager Butler.

Bath.

CERTAINLY my dear Constance, nothing can be more fair; if the young man will be so good as to entertain, let him be also entertained in his turn; I inclose papers which may possibly assist your memory.

Harley is a very good creature, I am particularly attached to him; he has some claims of which he will always remain ignorant, on my friendship; and could he be persuaded to enter the great world, my father would exert all his interest, in his favor; but the strange manner, in which Mrs. Montford educated him, and the odd fancies, she was so fond of instilling, into his young mind, has I fear given him a vast deal of wisdom, with a very small portion of common sense: and it may be an instance of the former, that he chuses to keep out of the connections, where the latter only, can be of use to him.

I know not how it is Constance, but I feel a kind of self reproach, about practising on the ingenuity of such a guiltless creature: and it is a Hudibrastic salvo, only, that can reconcile me to my own principles; he, you know, fixes the ignomy of perjury, on the framer of oaths, not the swearer, as

“’Tis he that makes the oath that breaks it,
“Not he that for convenience takes it.”

So I wish to lay our cunning (I must give it that opprobrious epithet) among the rest of his sins—at the General’s door: but it rebounds, and crimson the cheek of your

M. MONCRASS.

LETTER XIV.

Mrs. Butler, to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square.

PROFIT by my example, see how ready I am to oblige *you*.

General Moncrass my dear Edward, is the only surviving son of the Earl of Moncrass; whose name you find, among the ill destined chiefs who followed the fortunes of the late Pretender, and whose all were sacrificed to mistaken loyalty, in the rebellion of forty-five.

The family of Moncrass is said to be lineally descended from a female branch of the house of Stuart; and the chiefs, have in different wars, been equally signalized for their bravery in battle, and their mercy in conquest:—Mrs. Butler, who is well-read in history, declares, Scotland does not boast a more noble race:—the men, she says, were to a proverb valiant, and the women virtuous; and in all the anecdotes, which the annals of the Scottish nation have handed down to posterity, the name of Moncrass has stood among the highest on the list of fame.—Ever steady in their faith, invincible in their courage, and unshaken in loyalty, and attachment to their natural princes—it is the less wonder, that the late Laird should be among the first who offered themselves voluntary champions in the cause of that unfortunate adventurer “Charles Stuart.”

Lord Moncrass had been liberally educated, and his fortune was large; but having married young, the daughter of a neighbouring Peer, who had little more to boast than her beauty, and family honors; and who added to the strength of his house by presenting him yearly with an addition to it. He prudently resolved to reside entirely at the family-castle, and there personally superintend the education of his children, who, except one daughter, were all males.

Lord Moncrass was a rigid catholic; and his lady being also a strict bigot to the same faith, their children were unfortunately brought up members of the church of Rome, so that they were thereby precluded from the usual resources of provision for the younger branches of their family, by procuring for them commissions in the military or naval service of their country.

The establishment of five sons, who were either to be settled in independence at home, or sent into foreign service, may be supposed to be a great weight on the mind of so haughty a peer, and so affectionate a father as Lord Moncrass. The present General, who was the youngest but one, and twin-brother to the only daughter of the family, very early evinced his inclination to a military life; and at the age of fifteen, requested his father to give him credentials to an uncle then in the Portuguese army, through whose

interest *he* might also procure a commission and begin his career in the profession of arms, which his heart panted after.

The troubles in Scotland, were at this time, on the point of breaking out; and Lord Moncrass, as well as his brother, the Colonel, then at Lisbon, were deeply engaged in all the cabals forming in behalf of the young Pretender. Three of his sons, fine promising young men, were embarked in the same fatal cause, and were all appointed to very high offices in the mock-ministry; the fourth, filled with the ardor of juvenile heroism, was constantly beseeching his father and mother to send him to Portugal: the fifth was yet too young to have his destination fixed.

Notwithstanding Lord Moncras's ardent attachment to the house of Stuart, there were moments, when the possibility of their not being successful, would intrude on the warm hopes his zeal inspired; even when he most exulted in the courtly honors promised his family, and the glory of being one of the principal means of restoring a prince of his own race, to the throne of Scotland; the dire consequences to himself and children of a failure in their enterprizes, arose in terrible array to his imagination. Lady Moncrass was a perfect heroine; regard not me she would say; should misadventure attend our cause, I shall die with pleasure for my prince.

Each of their sons, whose age entitled him to be confided in, expressed the same enthusiastic ardor; and Lord Moncrass gloried in the loyalty of his family. But what, said he sighing, if we fall, will become of our lovely daughter? For her, indeed, the mother also trembled; at sight of her opening beauties, and the thousand nameless graces that shot from her clear blue eyes, maternal tenderness momentarily triumphed over mistaken loyalty.

After many consultations on the subject, they determined on sending her, under the care of a faithful domestic, with her twin-brother, to Colonel Moncrass,—And, said the ill-fated nobleman; that my fears for the future fate of this darling of my soul, may not unnerve me in the hour of danger; I will remit her pension to my brother, with strict orders to have her immediately professed, should she become fatherless.

The minds of women, my dear Edward, are generally thought to acquire strength, or at least, to reach maturity earlier than those of men; but it should seem, it was not so Lord and Lady Moncrass judged of their children; for, while they wept over their daughter, who was a beautiful girl just entering her fifteenth year, they closeted young Reuben; and, as if influenced by a presage of the sad catastrophe that awaited their family, solemnly recommended his sister to his love and protection; entreated him to supply to her, by his attentive tenderness, those absent relatives, those fond friends, from whom her destiny might, perhaps, forever separate her; and they conjured him, never to deviate from the principles of honor and rectitude, which had been instilled into his young mind, by his noble parents.

Take this sword, Reuben, said Lord Moncrass, vainly striving to conceal his anguish, his voice faltering, and his eyes up-lifted to heaven; and with it, thy father's blessing;—let it not rest in the scabbard when the honor of thy country, or the glory of the prince thou servest, demands a soldier's aid—but never dishonor thy own nature, or thy father's house, by drawing it in the defence of folly, or in the heat of passion; a tavern broil, or vindictive spirit is equally disgraceful to a man of honor.—Go, my son, thou canst not travel out of the reach of Providence; thou canst not command success, but thou may'st deserve it:—remember, at the moment when thou receivest thy father's fond—perhaps, his last adieu; when he put the sword, he had long worn himself, into the hand of his beloved son, *his* principles were untarnished by *one* unjust thought; and his honor, bright as the blade of the weapon he wore for its defence;—Go thou, my son, “and do likewise.”

Penetrated with the solemnity and tenderness of this scene, and overwhelmed with dutiful fondness and regret; the youth, on his knees, promised a strict adherence to the will of his parents, and a firm attachment to their principles both of loyalty and faith. Lord and Lady Moncrass, fervently praying for a blessing on them, then tore themselves from their parting children.

They arrived safe at Lisbon. Miss Moncrass was immediately entered as boarder in a convent, where many noble families placed their daughters; and the young hero was received with every mark of honor due to his birth, and aspiring spirit, into the Portuguese army: his Majesty, the then king of Portugal, presented him his brevet himself.

Whether it was, that matters were not yet ripe, or from what other cause, the rebellion did not break out this year; and Lord Moncrass had the pleasure to hear from his brother, the highest encomiums on both his children; but the following year Europe was in flames, Charles landed in Scotland, and was instantly joined, among other noblemen, by Lord Moncrass and his three eldest sons.

The end of this rebellion proved fatal to the house of Moncrass; the two eldest sons were kill'd in different rencontres in England, whither they followed the Pretender; the third received a deadly wound, while fighting by his father's side at Preston: and, at the last decisive battle, Lord Moncrass himself, covering the Pretender's retreat, received a blow from a Highland loyalist, which deprived him of sense, and he was taken prisoner by a party of horse, whose irritation against him was the stronger, as he certainly prevented Charles from falling into their hands, and thereby deprived them of the great reward set on his head;—instead, therefore, of treating him with the respect and attention due to his rank, he was suffered to linger under the anguish of a great number of wounds, 'till the troops reached their headquarters; when the royal Duke who commanded the army, being informed of his situation, and probably sated with the vengeance he had taken on the foes of his father, ordered the wounded chief to be properly attended; and it is possible he might have recovered, had not the untimely fate of his wife, and young son, been incautiously told him.

That unhappy Lady, as soon as the certain news of the defeat, where all was lost, reached her, fled from the castle in the night, with her young son; and in attempting to cross a river, in a place where it was not fordable, an end was at once put to their misfortunes and their lives. Their bodies were afterwards taken up, and buried with family honors, in the ancient receptacle of the house of Moncrass.

These cruel tidings, brought to the wounded Lord, almost as soon as he recovered his senses, threw him into a fever, which putting a period to his life, saved him from those further misfortunes which awaited the other noblemen, who had shared his fate, in being made the prisoners of an offended king.—

And thus, my dear Edward, I have, you see, began to evince my readiness to oblige *you*,—let my good-nature operate in kind;—be sure you write all that passes at Belle-Vue. My James says he will put every thing you wish our good mother not to see between hooks—but as she is so kind as to furnish me with most of the particulars I have, and shall send you, respecting the Moncrass family, *her* curiosity must also be indulged by the sight of your Arcadian anecdotes.

This is an enormous letter, but I could not prevail on myself to conclude it 'till I had finished the history of Lord and Lady Moncrass, and the part of their family who perished in the rebellion. I shall begin my next with the young soldier we left in Lisbon.

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XV.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

WHAT a treasure, my Caroline, is your correspondence!—What an obligation does it confer on your grateful Edward.—It was in vain, after reading your affecting history of the unhappy family of Moncrass, that I courted rest. Sleep, the sweet nurse of exhausted nature, affrighted at the calamitous consequence of civil discord, wing'd her airy flight to pillows, unstained with sympathetic sorrow;—yes, Caroline! my eyes paid a sad tribute to the woes of the misguided Scottish hero; and I am filled with more than female curiosity to know the remainder of the interesting story;—let me, I beseech you, thank my sister, my friend, for a very large packet next post: and in return, the best I can make, I will beguile you also of your tears, for the fate of my poor village maid.

Patty is still ill—very ill; I visit her daily: the heretofore bright dressers, and large oak tables, mourn her inability to perform her accustomed task; the polish'd hearth, and shining pot-lids, no longer grace the miller's kitchen; the birds and flower-pots are totally neglected; and the children are of all colours, but that the water leaves on the skin; they sit on the green bank before the door, and announce to all that pass, that mammy's leg is worse, and dear sister Patty's heart is breaking.

Poor Lucas is unable to work; the neighbours are therefore, obliged to carry their corn two miles off, to be ground; the most insensible will feel for themselves; and this inconvenience being general, the cause is as generally imprecated; Hodge has been piously, and heartily sent to perdition by the whole parish; but Hodge is, most probably at the same instant, a mighty clever fellow,—too clever to reflect on the desolation his vices have wrought in an honest family.—Well, Caroline, we may moralize, but we can do no more.

I have sent a woman to assist in taking care of the younger children, but the officiousness of fond affection, will not resign the object of its care, however unable to perform the sad office, of watching the last look, and sustaining the dying form on which our sorrows hang.—There sits the unhappy girl, supported by her father, her head reclining on the bosom of her lame mother, the rose forever faded on her cheek, the mild lustre of her eye, no longer drowned with tears, but bent on the earth in joyless solemnity: Adown the honest miller's rugged cheek, the tears chace each other, the mother—but *her* looks, *her* anguish, are too poignant for expression, too sad for description.

Alas poor maid! I did not think that love had so strongly seized thy young heart; she *will* die Caroline, she *should not*, and, I am ready to swear with benevolent Toby, she *shall not*, die, but her disorder is past the reach of medicine.

No subject to write on but Patty, I can think of nothing, but her present woes, and those which are past of the noble family of Moncrass; ah Caroline; at the throne of mercy, who will arraign the souls of the victims of public policy? who condemn those of credulous fondness?

Did I tell you the General, whom I shall now behold with veneration, promised to drop in on my solitude, as he was pleased to call the Hermitage? I am honored with a general invitation to dine; and am now preparing to accept the last; he devotes he says, this day to elegant friendship; polite, dangerous General Moncrass; what would become of my resolutions, if indeed there were many like you?

One word more—

So Caroline made a merit to Mr. Montford of my visiting at Belle-Vue; and he is pleased at that prodigious effort; I am happy to gratify him in any point, that leaves me master of my own actions; but his threats are terrible, he will adopt *your* child, oh! what havoc, will this resolution make in my sedentary scheme; you may tell him, but whisper it as a profound secret, that I also, mean to appoint the same little personage, heir to the vast estates, of dear Caroline, your affectionate,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XVI.

Mrs. Butler to Edward Harley.

Norfolk-Street.

I am, my dear Edward, as much interested in the history I am sending you of the noble, but unfortunate family of Moncrass, as if I had never before heard it—nor indeed have I, but in a summary way: Mrs. Butler says, that Lady Mary and herself, were so affected when the General related it to them, that they made minutes of most of the interesting events, and from those she gives me the heads of what I now send you.

When the fatal tidings reached Lisbon, of the loss of his father, and the destruction of his family, the situation of the young orphan may be more easily imagined than described. Colonel Moncrass had held secret correspondence, both with his brother and Charles.—Had the latter succeeded in his claims on the crown of Great Britain, it is not to be doubted but the whole house of Bourbon would have claim'd their degrees of merit, in an event so important to the Stuarts, and so interesting to all Europe.—

But now, that the enemies of the reigning king, were totally vanquished, and the voluntary ardor, with which he had been supported by his people, proved their zeal and attachment to him, and his family; every power, not already actually engaged in the war, sedulously avoided giving offence to a prince, who, by reigning in the *hearts* of his people, they found was invincible.

The court of Lisbon, according to the policy of the times, withdrew the rays of its favor, both from Colonel Moncrass and his young nephew; and, in a very short time after this afflicting news had reached him, the Colonel was given to understand, he must either accept of a commission to the Brazils, or, together with his nephew, quit the service; his Majesty having no farther commands for him; at the same time, a private hint was given, that a proper regard would be paid to their rank and merits.

The Colonel, enraged at this treatment, would have quitted the kingdom, but young Moncrass, now the exiled heir of a family, whose estates were all confiscated, and whose honors were no more, threw himself at the feet of his only relation, and besought him to accept the offers made them, of going to the Brazils.—

Whither, my dear uncle, said the noble youth, weeping—whither can we go? Will not the same cruel time-serving policy meet us in every court where we shew ourselves?—France, now solicits peace—Rome, has no sanctuary but in the bosom of her church—a general armistice will soon take place,—and even, if we were sure of more tolerable treatment elsewhere, what has a soldier to do in times when the sword rests in the scabbard?—Let us go—what clime can be more barbarous to us than this?—Can any air be more pestilential than that where we have been deprived of all the dear ties, which God has given equally to the infidel and the christian?—They send us to war with the

Ethiop—but what of that?—We carry our souls with us—the noble blood of Moncrass *will mount*, go where we will!—While we support our own dignity, what are countries, or climates to us?

Colonel Moncrass, charmed with the spirit of his nephew, strained him to his breast.

For me Reuben answered he, it is of little import where I breathe the wretched remains of my life: I have now no country—no inheritance—no kindred but thee, dear native Scotland! thou art, forever, lost to me—no more shall I greet my uncorrupted vassals—no more hear the voice of welcome as I enter; the now desolate habitation of my forefathers—sacred spot! where heroes, and where kings first saw the light!—No more retrace the scenes where Ossian filled the echoing valley with the woes of Fingal.

Those involuntary exclamations of sorrow, and regret; so overcame the Colonel; that his struggling heart, seemed bursting from his manly breast, and, he continued in an undescrivable agony, 'till he was relieved by a flood of tears.

Colonel Moncrass was one of the bravest of men; his undaunted soul had led him, a stranger to terror, thro' the embattled phalanx in the height of war, and carnage; he knew no fear but that of offending his *God*; and misguided as was his zeal for the fallen family of the Stuarts, yet even that error was *virtue* in *him*—because he acted up to the dictates of his conscience; which in souls like his, is but another word for honor; when he heard of the destruction of his family, considering them rather as martyrs to loyalty, than victims to rebellion, altho' he felt, he felt like a man, and a soldier:

The two orphans then under his sole protection he looked on, as being snatched from general destruction by the peculiar providence of heaven; and he resolved to be to them the father they had lost—but he had now no means to assist them; except his pay from the court of Lisbon,—he was a bachelor of free principles, and would not have been rich, had his purse not been continually drained as it was, in assisting the pretender.—

The rent roll of his estate in Scotland, was not more than eight hundred pounds per Annum: that was now confiscated, and himself under sentence of outlawry—when therefore he beheld the amiable youth before him, and heard his animated expressions, when he considered him as literally all that was left of their noble, and ancient family; his titles, estates, and hereditary honors, all expunged; he gave vent as I have described to his agony—he wept—but *his* tears, were not the common expressions of sorrow, they were such as Achilles shed for Briscies.

The young Reuben, saw this conflict in his noble minded uncle, with some degree of terror, but more compassion; his susceptible heart mounted to his eyes, he fell on the bosom of his uncle, and mingled tears with his:

A few moments thus passed in the luxury of grief; composed the Colonel, and reanimated his nephew.—Let us go, sir, said he, since our Eden is forever lost to us; let us, at least, seek the asylum we are denied by christians, among infidels; let us shew those

time-servers, *we* are superior to the selfish arts that influence the policy of courts—when we fight their battles, and extend their conquests, they may recollect this treatment with shame!—

Yes, Reuben! I will go with thee, answered the Colonel, broken-spirited, and overwhelmed by misfortune—little honor, and less fame, can I now hope for in the profession of a soldier; but I will watch thy steps, I will instruct thee how to temper the impetuosity of youthful bravery, with discretion; thou art a soldier, and thy soul pants for conquest—Oh! thou hast much yet to learn: the fierce tyger, who seizes on his trembling prey, is a superior brute to the fearless mortal who braves death,—a hero must do more, he must wish to preserve life.—Oh! thou precious wreck of the lost-treasure of our house—thou hast a soul worth an old man's care.—But thy sister—

Alas sweet girl! answered Reuben striving to repress a fresh gush of tears, what shall we do with her?

Dispose of her as her father commanded, devote her to God; what else *can* be done for the last female of the house of Moncrass, without dowry, family, or friends?

Reuben wept, but as it was now plain his father's intention, was thus to dispose of his daughter, in case of the worst;—and that he had, when he made this disposition, a presentiment of *that worst*—he could not offer an objection to a plan, which had so sacred a sanction; they therefore went immediately to the convent.

Miss Moncrass was now in her seventeenth year: the misfortunes of her family, tho' told in the gentlest manner, so affected her health, she would have certainly fallen a victim to grief, had it not been for the most refined friendship which subsisted between her and a young novice, daughter to the Marquis St. Lawrens, which induced that amiable creature to attend on every stage of her disorder, and with the most tender sympathy, so to blend piety, and resignation, with comfort; that the poor orphan recovered; to transfer the fondness of her innocent heart from the grave of her parents, to the bosom of her friend; in whose arms she was weeping, when her uncle, and brother appeared at the grate.

Very few arguments were necessary to persuade Miss Moncrass, to abandon a *world* which had been so fatal to those she held most dear; without a single tie in it, except her uncle, and brother, both of whom she was now on the point of losing,—what temptation had it for her?

Sister Victoire, the dear friend whose care had saved her life, was also destined to take the veil; her father was the french minister at Lisbon, and according to the etiquette of the french noblesse, it was necessary to preserve the dignity of his family, by cutting off the younger branches from society.

This amiable creature's heart accorded with her destiny; she was a being formed of the most harmonious materials; content irradiated her countenance, peace dwelt in her heart, and the fervency of her devotions regulated every sensation of her mind.

Under the influence of such an example, and in possession of such a friend, so far from having any objection to the veil—Miss Moncrass took her vows with a pious cheerfulness, that inspired respect, and rendered her brother perfectly happy.

The ceremony was performed the week before the Colonel and his nephew set sail on their honorable exile.

The young devotee felt far more grief in parting from those dear, and only relatives, than she was sensible of in abandoning the rest of the world:—and now, having settled her quietly in her convent, and sent my Heroes in quest of adventures; I shall conclude this letter with a quotation from your favoured author, that might have suited Miss Moncrass, and which is not inapplicable to my Edward.

“With the sort of people, who have either seen nothing of the world, or too much; where is the merits of resigning, what one is unacquainted with, or weary of? The praiseworthy recluse, are those who enter the world with innocence, and retire from it in good-humour.”

Adieu,

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XVII.

Edward Harley, Esq. to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

ANOTHER day passed at Belle-Vue, retrospectively delightful; if refined sense, elegant hospitality, and a welcome, where friendship, and politeness, were blended could render it so.

Who can reconcile the contradictions in this man's character? He is publicly said to be of libertine principles, a violater of the marriage-vow; one, who tramples on the laws of society; who lives in open, and criminal intercourse with one amiable female, while another, *his wife*, a woman possessed of every female virtue, to whom he is under uncommon obligations, feels the sharp tooth of ingratitude, pines in secret, and is lost to rank, society, and all the comforts of life.—

Yet, this man can shed the tear of sensibility, compassion is the leading trait in his disposition; he is blessed with a brilliant understanding; all his sentiments are noble, his decisions just, and his actions, as far as the eye of man can reach, mark'd by the strictest propriety:—but sister, can we wonder a man *thus* accomplished, *thus* adorned with wisdom, and experience, should have it in his power to attach to himself the voluntary affections of any woman, of a common share of taste, and understanding? Or, that having once reconciled the matter to his own conscience, he should not want arguments to convince one of the weaker sex—pardon me, Caroline, the offence against honor, is sanctified by passion.

My opinion of Agnes rises, as I become more acquainted with the General:—the woman for whom *such a man* would go *such lengths*; for whom he would *forego such happiness*; to whom he would make *such a sacrifice*, must be mistress, not only of uncommon allurements, she must, however it may be perverted, have a mind—A thousand thanks dear Caroline, your paquet is just arrived—I kiss your seal, and am so eager to proceed in the history, I have hardly patience to sign myself your affectionate

EDWARD HARLEY.

* * * * *

Oh Caroline! my curiosity is painfully arrested; I had opened your letter, and the evening being fine, walked out with it: without any previous intention, my steps were involuntarily turned to the mill;

I had been so used of late, to make morning and evening visits there, that with your letter in my hand, I was at their door before I knew I was on the way thither; are my lines crooked? Do you perceive the agitation of my nerves?—Patty Lucas is no more!

Oh sir! cried the youngest boy, Patty is better, indeed she is; and mammy gave us all an apple, for joy; pray go in, and you will have an apple too. I was so interested in your narrative, that altho' glad to hear the girl was better, I was not disposed to be interrupted; and was turning away, when the woman I had placed there to assist in the family, came hastily out, and told me, Patty heard the children name me, and begged I would let her speak to me.

Old Lucas was kneeling by the side of his dame, in thankful rapture; he wept even to sobbing, whilst she audibly returned her thanks to Heaven for the gleams of hope, the present composure of their child afforded; and fervently prayed, she might be restored to her sorrowing parents.

The girl herself, had a crimson flush in her cheeks, her lips were even more red, and her eyes shone brighter than when she was in rude health; yet, Patty Lucas, within six short months, was the pride of the village.

She extended both her hands towards mine, and with a modest confidence, I can never forget, drew it towards her, and pressing it to her breast—

I have been, sir, said she, very bad since I saw you this morning; and I was so sorry, and so grieved;—

Why, my girl, were you sorry?

Because, sir, I had not, methought, thanked you half enough, nor prayed half enough, that God would bless you here, and hereafter; and preserve you from the snares of the false-hearted—Oh sir! it is very hard to die—to die of love: some people may make a scoff of it—but believe me—believe poor Patty Lucas, it may be—as to Hodge, I forgive him, he had a hard heart, but that, you know, he could not help;—and so I hope God will forgive him too;—but who will comfort my poor father and mother? Will you, sir?—Will you comfort my poor mother, and help my honest father?—People will tell them of their daughter—they will want some good-body to take their parts.

Respiration became almost as difficult to me, as it was to the poor dying creature before me, who gasped at every sentence; I felt a rising in my throat, which a lady would have called hysterics, and could not answer.

She repeated her earnest question, Will you sir?—Will you comfort my poor father and mother? 'till a sudden paleness over-spread her face, which became covered with large drops of cold sweat; her eyes, now deprived of the transient luster which but a moment before dazzled my sight, still fix'd their anxious looks on mine; while she added, in a low hollow voice, If you say you will, I know I may believe you.

Shocked at an alteration so sudden, and awful, I could not help thinking myself in the immediate presence of the Deity; I solemnly promised to protect her parents.

One parting beam now shot from her closing eyes.—

Enough, enough—I am satisfied; and leaning her head back, on her distracted mother—without one sigh, one groan, expired—poor Patty Lucas!

I cannot reflect; I fear I should be wicked were I to attempt it. Dame Lucas will not long survive her daughter—time may console the father; it is now the house of misery; with such an object in her coffin the voice of comfort cannot be heard; all that can be at present done for them, is to take care that want may not be added to their afflictions.

For the honor of your sex, Caroline, I must tell you an anecdote you will not meet with often in the great world.

Twenty maidens, some of whom are servants, whose wages do not exceed forty shillings a year, have subscribed their half-crowns for white gloves, and favours, to accompany my poor girl's remains to the grave; as many young men follow their example, and they have begged my *honor* to lead the procession: I will take care their purses are not lighter, for this mark of sensibility; but shall not comply with their request.—

No! not even in the grave, will the malevolent, and envious, suffer their victims to rest; Mrs. Swamp is grievously offended at all the maidens, as to the fellows, no wonder they are sorry, the creature was of their sort; but for a virtuous damsel for to be seed in such company, dead or alive—Oh for shame! if Mr. Swamp was of her mind, (which he seldom is) he'd excommunicate every soul on 'um, and as to Mister Harley, she wonders the dead can rest in the grave, to think that, poor, dear Mrs. Montford's substance should be spent after that fashion, is a burning shame, so it is; but howsoever, birds of a feather, some folks may be fond of such sort of trumpery, as husseys and bastards, truth was not to be told at all times, because why, she believed some folks might, if truth was known, be bastards themselves.

Do you know Caroline, I am weak enough to be disturbed at this foolish woman's impertinence; not on my own account you may be sure; but poor dame Lucas. After the woman who attends her, had told me of Mrs. Swamp's malice, looked emphatically in my face;—Ah sir, said the weeping mother; *she* has no children, she never gave suck, was not afflicted with sickness, had no dear dutiful girl to nurse her, nor, oh great God! she cannot know a mother's pangs at such a fight as that; pointing to the still lovely corps of her dead child.

Adieu my beloved Caroline, I do not trouble you with any thing to James, as I write to him at G——, but beg you will render my best respects acceptable to the dowager Mrs. Butler, and when she writes to the continent, hope my name is not omitted among the enquiring friends of Mr. Henry Butler,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XVIII.

Mrs. J. Butler to Edward Harley, Esq.

THE Colonel and his young charge reached the Brazils without any material incident, where the former after signalizing himself in many actions, and adding fresh lustre to a character which required none, his own private sorrows, added to what he always felt for the family to whom his fortune had been sacrificed, co-operating with the bad air of the climate, he died within four years after his arrival at the Brazils.

Young Moncrass succeeded him both in rank and character; but the loss of his only friend was too sincerely felt, and too bitterly regretted, to be easily forgotten; and he had besides this another cause for anxiety, it was now a twelve-month since he had heard from his sister; her correspondence had hitherto been very regular, not a ship from Portugal had touched at any part of the Brazils, but her fond wishes for his welfare were conveyed to him; the pleasure he took in this correspondence, was augmented by the perceptible improvement of her mind; her letters were at once affectionate, entertaining, and pious: but he had not received any of those momentos of a sister's love (altho' he had continued to write constantly to her) some months before the Colonel's death, and now a twelve-month more had elapsed, without affording him the consolation to know his sister existed.

A billious complaint, which gained strength from the anxiety of his mind, was increasing so fast on his constitution, that by the advice of his physician, he wrote to the minister, praying leave to return to Lisbon for change of air: the feuds of the times which occasioned the honorable exile, into which he was sent, being now no more; he easily procured an order from court, and returned to Portugal, after having been six years absent, in the twenty-third year of his age: his first visit was to the Convent where his sister was professed.

Poor Moncrass! born to experience all the bitterness of fortune, could hardly credit his senses; when told that his sister, the modest, amiable creature he left so satisfied, and so happy in her situation; her whose expanding understanding had given him such innate pleasure, had violated her vows to Heaven, and eloped from the Convent: and so it actually proved.

To those who know with what rigour this crime is punished, and in what abhorrence it is held by rigid catholics, it will not appear strange, that the young criminal had taken every precaution, human sagacity could suggest, to prevent her route, and connections from being discovered; nothing had transpired that could throw the least light on the transaction: Victoire had been privately interrogated, and had publicly stood the examination of the Inquisitory Court—her grief and consternation at this step of her bosom friend, was natural and sincere; she utterly denied any knowledge of her elopement; and declared that so far from aiding, or abetting her; had she entertained the

slightest suspicion of her design—she should have held it a duty to that God, to whom they were both bound, to prevent such a disgrace being thrown on their holy religion, and the pious sisterhood.—

The rank, and family of this young nun, independent of her own virtuous character; precluded all suspicion of her veracity.

The sentence of excommunication, with all the terrible train of curses, usual on the commission of such extraordinary crimes, were publickly denounced against the young apostate, her abettors, and accessaries; but the resentment of the church proved in this case impotent, and all its endeavours to recover the lost fugitive, abortive.

Young Moncrass was a bon catholic, but by no means a bigot: it is true he considered his sister as an unhappy sinful woman, whose eternal salvation was forfeited by her breach of vow, but still, she was his sister; a sister who was consigned with a *solemnity and tenderness* that ever dwelt on his mind, to his fraternal care, by his dead parents—

The same affections, sentiments, and passions; had filled their young hearts, they had grown up together with encreasing love, and all the warmth of youthful fondness: and so early divided from the rest of his family, all his affections had naturally centered in her.

The young soldier's domestic sorrow did not facilitate his recovery; he waited on Victoire, who burst into an agony of grief when she saw him; they wept together, but the nun could not, or would not, give him any information respecting his sister's affairs; and as to her last step, she declared she had not the least suspicion of it, 'till, to her eternal sorrow, it was irretrievable.

Poor sinful creature! added she, I pray that her penitence may be sincere—I hourly implore the Virgin Mary to protect, and inspire her with true repentance; greatly as I abhor the crime, I yet pray, the criminal may now, and ever, escape the temporal punishment, that would be the sure reward of her guilt, was she to be taken—Alas! such is my dread of that event, this convent, once an earthly paradise, is now become horrible to me; I tremble at every summons to the Abbess; no stranger comes to the parlour without alarming my fears, and filling me with terror; I have solicited the Marquis to send me to Paris, where I may be immediately professed; my parents wish indeed to defer my return to France, 'till they can accompany me—but alas! I have lost the sister of my soul, eternally lost her; and in this place am in agonies, at the fear of her being brought back.

The Marquis, after ten years residence at this court, is now recall'd; it is my mother's wish I should be in France, where all their interest lies; and I have hopes I shall soon leave a place where every thing reminds me of my lost friend; where I am hourly offending Heaven by my inability to divide the sin from the sinner.

A flood of tears accompanied every word that fell from Victoire's lips, and the young soldier gave himself up to a grief and dejection that preyed on his constitution, and

reduced his fine figure to a mere spectre; he did not, however, forget to pay his court to the prince, in whose service his brows had often been crowned with laurels.

His Majesty remembered the fine youth who accompanied Colonel Moncrass to the Brazils; and knew he was the last branch of the family of Moncrass: the fame of his bravery, and the report of his good sense and humanity had also reached the court; but the wan appearance of the young Hero, was ill-calculated to revive the *memory* of his former pleasing form; or dress it in the glowing tints, which ever accompanies valiant actions, when added to a captivating figure.

It served however, to convince the King, that the leave he had solicited to return to Europe, was really necessary to his existence.

The heart must have been impenetrable, that beheld his interesting figure, and knew his misfortunes; without being prejudiced in his favor.

His Portuguese Majesty received him very graciously, and he was honor'd with the particular notice of the royal family: and notwithstanding the disaffection of his ancestors, he was invited by the English ambassador, to his table and assemblies.

And here, my dear Edward, I wish to proceed to the commencement of his acquaintance with Lady Mary,—but I am much indisposed, and must postpone the history till I am better—Adieu, I know I have your prayers.

CAROLINE BUTLER.

LETTER XIX.

James Butler, Esq. to Edward Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square.

GIVE me joy, dear Edward, my Caroline is safe: she has presented me with a cherub, lovely as herself; and both the dear angels are, thank God, well: I was not return'd from the circuit when the happy news was brought me, but you may be sure I flew home on the wings of anxiety and love.

Caroline begs you will continue to write, and in order to encourage you so to do, my mother will give you the remaining part of General Moncras's history.

Lord Ruthven's family are returned to Bath; his Lordship, by order of his physicians: Lady Mary too, is, we are grieved to find, very much indisposed.—One only shade is there in that woman's excellent character; the pride of her heart, has destroyed her peace: had she given a little way, had she assailed the General with tears instead of reproaches, he would,—he must have soon seen his error; his heart is noble, and a man of stricter honor does not breathe—but he has also a competent share of pride; Lord Ruthven's reproaches must have sunk deep in such a mind as his—and Lady Mary is the sufferer; she adores her husband, and all her attempts to regain her tranquility, serves only to prey on her own health, and render herself and family miserable.

Miss Neville suffers too; they see no Company, and the poor girl is forbid holding any correspondence with, or even speaking of young Moncrass; this restraint Julia very ill brooks; tho' perhaps, it may be well for her, the estrangement took place when it did; for, if I know any thing of the female heart, *her's* would infallibly have chosen young Reuben for its keeper:—Pray is he now with his father, or where?

So, this Agnes is handsome, is she?—And accomplished?—And plays finely?—I know a young Barrister, who was with us on the circuit, (an acquaintance of Mrs. de Vallmont's, the lady whom the General has made her duenna) he speaks highly indeed, of both Vallmont and Agnes; says, the former is a woman of honor and character, the latter an angel; and I assure you, was so offended when I laughingly answered, *a fallen one*, that I expected a challenge—so, if you hear of a certain special pleader having committed murder, don't be surprized—I fancy my young blustering Barrister is her lover.

Lady Mary stands sponser to our young stranger, and we mean to accept Major Melrose's polite offer on the same occasion.

I cannot but wish that the interview between her Ladyship and the General's friend may be productive, tho' I have really given the matter up—Articles on both sides are signed.—

Ned, you don't mind politics, and if you did, I hate to write on the subject—but old Montford is minority mad: we send him every pamphlet, and news-paper, that comes out; and he has now taken it into his head, that it is extremely shameful either you, or I, are not in parliament: Caroline told him, she believed it would be a difficult matter to prevail on either of us to accept a seat in that august assembly, even was it to be offered without any expence.

He was downright angry—Very well, madam, said he, knitting his brows, and resting on his cane,—then I'll tell ye what I'll do myself, I'll *marry*; and since you are all too proud to pay any court to the old fellow, you will know the value of my partiality, *when it is lost*. Poor Caroline was much hurt at this threat, as it seem'd to imply a design to hold us in the meanest of all subjections, that of a dependance on his will; but he has great good-nature, notwithstanding his oddities, the tear no sooner glisten'd in Caroline's eye, than his own caught the infection; he bid her not mind him.

The old man will be doing, if he undoes the next moment. They parted good friends, tho' not without some oblique hints, about the *sacred character* of a *British senator*, and his intention that his Borough should, next sessions, be represented by independent men—but take notice, Mr. Edward Harley, I have no time to be a patriot.

Caroline desires a thousand kind remembrances may be added to those of, dear Edward, your affectionate

JAMES BUTLER.

LETTER XX.

Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.

Hermitage.

I partake your joy, my dear James; and send you the warm congratulation of friendship and brotherly love, on an event of such importance to your family, and the happiness of us all; our good Benson found her youth renew'd at the news, and begg'd, if so be as I could any way do without her, she might go to London to attend on her dear young lady; she had, she said laid all my things ready, a great while in expectation of going, I consented, and she accordingly set out this morning; good creature, I hope she will not find her heart stronger than her body; I need not, I know, desire you will send to fetch her from the inn.

I dined yesterday at Belle-Vue, and was not a little gratified, by the unbounded professions of friendship, and esteem, with which I was honored, by the noble owner of that charming mansion:—my sister desires I will give her a particularly description of Miss De Courci's person; but this is a more difficult task than she imagines; when I was last at Belle-Vue, Agnes, was indisposed, and she has yet some remains of langour, which gives an excess of delicacy, to her looks; there is an insinuating grace in her manner, that goes directly to the senses: were I a poet, and meant to describe the sort of beauty, which steals on the soul by sure, and imperceptible degrees, I think I should be understood, after contemplating *her face*, and *figure*; or, were I a painter, who had already drawn a perfect Venus, yet felt as painters I fancy often do; a something wanting, a finish, a life glow, *do you comprehend me?* I am sure Agnes De Courci's countenance, would guide my pencil; her smiles are irresistible, and her voice has music in its most common expressions—she is I believe, of what is called the tall middle size; there is a haughty turn in her carriage, which added to her elegant form, conveys an idea of pride; but you feel the error the instant she opens the prettiest mouth in the world: since I have seen this lady, I have thought that *any woman with such a mouth*, even if added to a very harsh and disagreeable set of other features, would be enchanting—as to her eyes, I protest I cannot tell of what colour they are, only that they are extremely brilliant, and that the whole of her face was I believe never equalled.

I don't know how it is, but I think there is a restraint in the General's behaviour to her; his eyes indeed dwell with pleasure on her countenance, and he pays an enthusiastic respect to her opinion; his delight is in calling to observation the many fine accomplishments she certainly possesses; but yet, there is a something that often clouds his countenance in the midst of her fascinations; I would hope it was the image of his noble wife, yet to confess truth, *I fear*, had I an Agnes,—I—but what stuff am I writing.

Old Lucas holds his lease under Mr. Thrift, which never being expired, he has received notice to quit; the honest soul on the point of being turned out of a dwelling, in

which he was born; and which has so long sheltered, and supported his family, now recollects he has other children, besides her so much lamented, and his grief for her death, becomes less violent, as his cares for the survivors increase.

I have taken a fresh lease in my own name, of Mr. Thrift, who had no objection to his tenant, but his poverty, and trouble; and supposing he would not, with a sick wife, and large family, be able to pay the rent.—The mill now works again.

Can it be the absence of old Benson? Surely no! I am actually tired, without having been employed; *you* will call it apathy; Mademoiselle de Courci would say it is ennui—No matter, God bless you, and your better self, my Caroline.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XXI.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to E. Harley, Esq.

Soho-Square,

Dear Sir.

MY beloved daughter imposes on me a task, which however agreeable to myself, may not, perhaps be entirely so to you; as the cold inanimate prolixity of an old woman, will form a great contrast between her descriptions, and that of so sprightly and elegant a penwoman as Mrs. Butler: you must however, accept of my wish to indulge *her*, and gratify *you*; and take *matter* for *manner*.

When Colonel Moncrass, (he had, you are informed, succeeded to his uncle's rank) was first introduced to the assemblies of the English ambassador, who was a man of the first quality, and lived in great splendor and magnificence: he was thought to be very near his dissolution; and his invalid state, added to the misfortunes of his family, interested all the English, who were then resident at Lisbon, in his favor; the Earl of Ruthven, with his Countess, and young daughter, were of this number; Lady Ruthven laboured under a complication of disorders, and was come to Lisbon in hopes to receive benefit from change of air; her daughter, Lady Mary, then in her eighteenth year, was universally admired: the value of gold, is, I believe, pretty equal in all countries; and the great fortune to which she was undoubted heiress, would have stamped perfection on a form less attractive than her's; but the truth is, she was really a most elegant young woman.

I had the honor to be of Lord Ruthven's party, as Mr. Butler was secretary to the Embassy; Lady Ruthven begged I would be her guest during her stay at Lisbon; her extreme ill health required, and would have commanded my attendance, had I not been, (which however I own I was) impelled by a stronger motive to accept her invitation.

My parents dying when I was very young, I became an orphan-ward to Lord Ruthven; and his Lady, who was my nearest female relation, had intirely superintended my education: Ruthven-house was my home. Lady Mary, is, it is true, five years younger than myself, but notwithstanding this disparity in our ages, we had, even at that early period of our lives, a mutual affection for each other, which ripened into the constant and warm friendship, that now, when youth, and all its appendages are fleeting, is the honor and comfort of my existence.

My heart was ever open to my young cousin, nor had her's a thought concealed from me. My marriage to Mr. Butler, not being, in point of rank, quite so eligible a one as my guardian thought my fortune entitled me to, was a secret to all but my cousin, a year after it had taken place; when my husband's appointment to Lisbon, and my situation,

rendered the discovery unavoidable; and it was matter of infinite joy, both to Lady Mary and myself, that we were not yet to be separated. I left my son in England with my mother-in-law, and followed Mr. Butler to Lisbon, with the Ruthven family.

I perfectly remember, the first time we saw Colonel Moncrass——That poor young man, said Lady Ruthven, carries death in his countenance; and by a sort of sympathy, invalids are apt to feel for each other, she contracted a regard for him, which was the foundation of the intimacy that afterwards took place in the family.

The Ambassador introduced Mr. Moncrass to Lord Ruthven, as a young officer in the Portuguese service; prudently passing over his forfeited rank, and title: but they were both, notwithstanding, very well known; and the respectful attention every where paid him, was as creditable to the feelings of his countrymen, as flattering to himself.

He very soon became one of our family; and, contrary to hope, his health began slowly to mend. Lady Mary, whose amiable and tender attention to her sick mother, endeared her to every feeling heart, was also, on many occasions, the blooming handmaid of Esculapius to young Moncrass; the Countess, who, like most people affected with ill-health, fancied she could cure the diseases of other people, tho' her own had baffled the art of medicine, was perpetually prescribing for the Colonel; and Lady Mary was the fair administratrix of all the quackery her mother so lavishly bestowed on him; but it sometimes happened, that the medicines were forgot, in the pleasing tête-à-têtes they authorized; Mr. Moncrass was often called upon to recount the misfortunes of his family, and the misadventures of his youth; his heart, ever softened at the recital, found itself attracted by the sympathy he excited; our tears were blended with his; and the innocent Lady Mary, might have been truly said to

“Love him for the dangers he had past.”

In a few months, health began to reanimate his countenance, strength, and manly grace succeeded to the debilitated state he was in, when introduced to us, and I do not remember to have seen a handsomer man; the young gentleman I am now addressing, is certainly a very fine person, but General Moncrass, at the period I am writing of, was the most captivating figure I ever saw.

The Countess still continued declining, and the Earl just then being seized with a violent fit of the gout, was thereby rendered incapable of attending us, in some little sea excursion, which our physicians ordered the Countess to take; we were therefore consigned to the protection of Moncrass.

Two months were taken up in those little voyages, which tho' not attended with the hoped for benefit to the health of Lady Ruthven, passed as delightfully, as rapid——nothing could exceed the polite and respectful attention of the young soldier, he seemed to exist but for us, and Lady Mary's heart was his involuntary reward; nor was he less attached to her; I was an interested observer, I perceived their mutual affection, and

knowing the immense wealth my cousin would possess, and the affectionate friendship the Earl, and Countess both bore the Colonel; saw no impropriety in their indulging the bias of their hearts; I thought them indeed, born for each other, and looked forward to an union that promised so much certain felicity with pleasure; but my anticipations were in every respect founded in error; their union was far, very far distant; and when it did take place you see sir, how short lived the happiness, I, foolishly thought, would last for life.

Lady Ruthven tired out with the unavailing efforts of her physicians, and finding no benefit from change of climate, took a sudden resolution to return to England: the Earl had a yacht fitted up for the accommodation of his lady, and always in readiness to sail; a few hours notice only, therefore, were necessary, before all was ready for their embarkation.

To describe the anguish of my young friend, or paint the despair visible in the countenance of Colonel Moncrass, would be alike impossible; Lady Mary threw herself on my neck—oh Constance! cried she what will become of me? I leave the only man my heart will ever acknowledge, I part, perhaps for ever from him who is my fate—pity me dear Constance, oh! were not my mother's life in danger, I would lose *mine*, rather than to be torn from him—Yes Moncrass I would die a thousand deaths rather than leave thee.—

We were in this situation when he entered—my poor cousin just raised her head and then hid her face in my bosom; my arms were thrown round her, and we were all incapable of utterance; the Colonel bent his knee before us; and equally unable to conceal, or to repress his emotion, took the hand of Lady Mary, pressed it to his lips and precipitately retired.

What is he gone cried she? starting—has he then left me? Moncrass! Moncrass! wringing her hands, return once more; let me once more behold thee—her voice raised, and repeating his name, reached him as he was traversing an adjoining apartment—he hastily returned.

The confusion his re-appearance threw her into, crimsoned over her face, and neck, she trembled and turned from him.

What, said he (approaching and respectfully taking her hand) what would my lovely young friend, with her Moncrass?

She turned half round—*my* Moncrass said she deeply sighing, as she repeated his words—

Yes Lady Mary answered he, if the truest adoration, the fondest affection, the most heart-felt attachment, can make Moncrass, yours—

She interrupted him—dear Moncrass do not deceive me, the world, if it knew my weakness; how would it be despised? and my parents—ah my God! how would they condemn it? nay, perhaps on reflection, I may despise, I may condemn myself; but in this dreadful moment, the only one my fate may ever offer, what are forms, or public censure,

to the distracting anguish of my soul? say then again you are mine, and confirm it on your honor; and I swear (falling on her knees) by all the powers, who protect innocence, I will be your faithful Mary, as long as I exist.

Surprize, rapture, and love; were by turns predominant in the countenance of young Moncrass; he dropped on his knees, and folding his arms round her, was going to speak, when the Earl appeared at the opposite door.

Language is too faint, and it must be the pencil of an excellent artist, who could do justice to the features of us all; the Earl looked as if the attachment of two amiable young people, who had been indulged with each other's unreserved society near a twelve-month, was a thing that never before happen'd; and felt, I dare say, the utmost scorn and indignation against his daughter, for levelling her mind to the fugitive fortunes of poor Moncrass; however, he thought proper to conceal his resentment for the time, and taking his daughter's hand:

Mary, said he, your mother is extremely ill; she has just fainted: that posture would have well become you, had it been assumed in prayer for your dying parent.

Never was there a more dutiful child than Lady Mary; never one, who more strictly performed every obligation of duty and affection: the danger of Lady Ruthven banish'd Moncrass from her thoughts for a moment—Oh my mother! cried she, why was I not summon'd to her assistance?

The summons, Mary, would have found you engaged, said the Earl, as he led her out, coldly, and haughtily bowing to Moncrass, who stood the image of despondency.

Mr. Butler objected to my leaving him, and I had not the happiness to see Lady Ruthven after we parted: the Earl did not quit his daughter a moment, 'till his vessel was under weigh: my being present at the scene he had so malapropos interrupted, was certainly ground for suspicion against me: he could not, to be sure, suppose me to be very inimical to an affair of which I was so tame a spectator.

Moncrass took leave of Lady Ruthven, who prayed for a blessing on him, and to the instant of their separation, expressed the warmest solicitude for his happiness.

As soon as our dear friends were out of sight, Moncrass returned to his lodgings, and I to my chamber—You are, by this time, I presume, as tired of reading, as I am of writing: I beg to present, with my daughter's affectionate remembrance, those of, dear sir, &c.

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

LETTER XXII.

Mr. Harley to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

HOW shall I thank you my good Caroline, for the kind method you have taken to oblige me? or how express my sense of the honor Mrs. Butler condescends to confer on me?

You charge me to continue writing, but dear Caroline you must also direct me to a subject—Patty Lucas rests under the green turf—and her woes are no more remembered; I am not in the highest spirits in the world, nor I believe quite well—my visits are not so frequent at Belle-Vue as they have been—nor—in short I am indisposed—but you must have a letter you say.

Well then know that I have lately employed myself in directing the gothick library to be finished, which our ever regretted Mrs. Montford began. You remember the point of the rock which overlooks the waterfall; my new building is an octagon, so near its summit, that when the folding doors are open, the dashing of the water from the natural cascade, into the reservoir under, has a solemn and pleasing effect—I have contrived to cut a flight of steps from the summit of the rock, which carries you sometimes through the hanging wood, when you may fancy it is a subterraneous passage; at others, so close under the rock, that the dashing of the waters expose you to an artificial shower of rain: those steps bring you to an opening, where at once, you are surprised with a most beautiful view of the whole vale under the village; just where the water makes its way in divided streams from the natural reservoir; my point of view from hence, and which indeed was my principal object, is Belle-Vue; as the smooth current glides along the flowery bank, I have a secret pleasure in reflecting, the very same water which roars under my cell, gives that charming verdure which refreshes the senses, and delights the eye in Belle-Vue park, and garden; when I retreat from this beautiful scene, I reascend the steps to my new building; which if you please you may call the cell of contemplation; for there a dead silence reigns (save the waterfall) which inspires a solemnity, I would not exchange for all the nothings of the great world.

Well Caroline, how do you like my new building? it is at present so much in my favour, that I may be almost said to live there; my books, globes, musical instruments, laymen figures, and all my drawing apparatus are removed into it, and I am at this instant writing to you from thence—heavens!

A little boy, was in the midst of a bitter complaint against his daddy, for getting tipsey, and beating his mammy, for which he was earnestly praying I would have him put into the stocks; when behold Caroline! through the thick foliage of the grove, which leads from the house to my cell; I saw, and my sight ached at her brilliancy; a radiant, an

angelic figure! it was robed in white, it smil'd, and beckon'd; it was Agnes led by the General.

This Mr. Harley, is the first airing Mademoiselle has taken since her indisposition—she was desirous of seeing the habitation of so young a philosopher; Do you admit female visitors?—

Certainly sir—and I offered to take her disengaged hand.

To give you a proper idea of my cell, I believe I should have told you the effect it had on the lady, before I described it.—

Heavens! cried she shuddering, and starting back, what dreadful place is this?

I told her it was a new whim, and a very favorite one of mine; that if she would condescend to enter, the romantic gloom, which disgusted at first appearance, would grow familiar, and I hop'd she would like it—

Never, answered she, with vivacity—there is a horror—a something repugnant to my feelings in this place, to which I can never be reconciled: let us go sir, (to the General) if this be the abode of philosophy, we will be content to enter the habitations of poor human frailty.

This was affronting my hobby-horse; I said no more in its defence, but led to your drawing-room.—

Ay, said the General, this is something,—and pray where is the divinity for whom this pretty apartment is fitted up?

I told him it was your's.

While the chocolate was getting ready, Agnes ran over the keys of the organ; I look'd a request I could not utter, which the General perceiving begg'd a song?—

What charms are there in music! and what additional power does the first compositions receive from the voice of a beautiful female! Did you ever observe what a surprizing echo the room has?—Her voice—but there is no describing it;—I could not only hear, but I could see—Have I yet told you the colour of her eyes?—I believe not—they are clear, animated, brilliant hazel; her eye-brows, and eye-lashes are quite black;—her hair—but take her description from your favorite Italian:

“In waving ringlets, falls her beauteous hair,
 “That catch new graces from the sportive air;
 “Declin'd on earth, her modest look denies
 “To shew the starry lustre of her eyes;
 “O're her fair face, a rosy bloom is spread,
 “And stains her ivory skin with lovely red:
 “Soft breathing sweets, her opening lips disclose
 “The native odours of the blushing rose;

* * * * *

“And Heaven ne'er gave, to one of Adam's race

“So large a portion of celestial grace.”

Caroline, I wish you knew this woman, or rather, I wish she was worthy of being known to you—she is, that is she *would be*, were she any other than *what she is*—an angel.

The General, whom I had before acquainted with the fate of Patty Lucas, would walk to the mill, and, for reasons I very well knew, chose to go alone. General Moncrass, sister, is “The chearful giver whom the Lord loveth;” and in cases of benevolence, “lets not his left hand know what is done by his right”—he begg’d I would amuse Miss De Courci.

I was never more at a loss; there were many subjects on which I might have entertained her, but my tongue faltered, I actually could not speak; and my embarrassment encreased, as I saw she was attentively observing me; I could not stand the scrutiny of her mild eyes—for mild, and even tender at that moment they were. I abjure philosophy, and cannot now reason much of causes and effects, yet, why I should tremble at her gaze I know not; I have often said, I could be content to have my heart, and all its wanderings exposed to public view—Am I altered? lurks there, that within me, hidden, perhaps from myself, but open to her penetrating eye, at which I ought to blush? how else could her look, which is modesty itself, so confuse me?

After a silence I had not power to break.

You are a young philosopher sir, said she, and you are determined, the General informs me, in opposition to the wishes of all your friends, to waste your youth and fine talents in this retirement.

I bowed assent.

But do you really conceive sir (continued she) enchanting as this place certainly is, it will always be a boundary to your wishes?

Again, I could only bow—

Have you no latent desire to mix with society?—No ambition to gratify? will those shades forever conceal you from the unerring shafts of the blind Deity?—

Come Mr. Harley, your friends have been unsuccessful, the General has also failed; conduct me through the walks of your fancied elysium; let us see whether I cannot find arguments to prevail on you to quit it, and join the social world.

I retreated from her offered hand.

Ah coward! (said she) you will not trust yourself with me.

I could now speak.

Happiness, and I, madam, have often roved together through those unconscious shades; sweet peace was our handmaid, and contentment followed our steps:—

Heavens! cried Agnes, would you insinuate that I should interrupt such society? is it impossible for you to keep happiness, and me company together.

Are not your designs madam, hostile to *my* ideas of what constitutes happiness? and shall I be so ungrateful, as to expose my favorite nymphs to such a dangerous enemy?

No Miss De Courci! but if you are disposed to endear to my memory the shades I love, walk with me thro' them, unprejudiced by the fallacious reasonings of a world I dislike; suffer me to be eloquent in their praise, let me point to you each sweet recess, where the voice of passion was never heard, where ambition never entered, and where a right turned mind can never feel a painful solitude; if you suffer me to do this, I am ready to attend you; but I will not venture to hear *your* lips condemn my retirement; for how then can I ever hope again to enjoy the wonted companions of my tranquil hours?

Well sir—she hesitated—well Mr. Harley, then I think we had better not, we will stay where we are—

Again she observed I was a young philosopher, a very young philosopher.

A silence ensued, which *she* broke.

Well Mr. Harley, if you won't let me talk to you, shall I sing?

Would you believe it, I could not answer this simple question, I could only place a seat to the organ which she accepted and sung from Handel's Music—

“Love sweet poison”

It was involuntary Caroline, I could not help it, I leaned over her chair, and repeated

“Sweet Harmonist, and beautiful as sweet”

“And young as beautiful, and gay as young”

And oh sister! the pity of it, the pity of it, that I could not add

“And *Innocent* as gay,”

The return of General Moncrass put an end to a visit, the most painful, and pleasing I ever experienced; he pressed me to return with them to Belle-Vue, I declined his invitation, but have regretted it ever since; I cannot bear the retrospect of my own conduct; it was so very stupid, Agnes was perhaps offended, I can still less bear she should think I could be wanting in respect to *her*, she is very amiable, how could I be so unaccountably foolish? the mortification I feel on this occasion drives every thing else out of my head, what could she think of me, a philosopher she call'd me, with an emphasis,— I will certainly go to Belle-Vue, to-morrow—

* * * * *

The boy teased me to have his daddy put in the stocks, his mother now teases me to forgive him; I begin to be weary of interfering in the foolish affairs of the village— would to-morrow were come—

* * * * *

I am this instant favored with three large packets from the dowager Mrs. Butler, it is arrived at a most happy period, my mind is in such a state, I can neither look into myself, nor my Hermitage with pleasure; but I retire with the General and Lady Mary: adieu Caroline, adieu Butler,

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER XXIII.

Mrs. Dowager Butler to Edward Harley Esq.

Soho-Square.

TWO days, after the departure of our friends, past, and I only received enquiries after my health, from Moncrass; on the third he was announced.

The alteration in his countenance, during this short period, was incredible.

He was pale, dejected, and his words were scarcely articulate; he was, he said, returning to his regiment; an opportunity had luckily offered, a ship was under sailing orders for the Brazils; he should commission his agent to send after him what necessaries he might have occasion for; he had met Mr. Butler at court, and was now come to wish me the health and peace—he stopped—

His manner was so solemn, the sound of his voice so sad, and his figure so interesting: I could not immediately answer him.

He took my hand, and dropping on one knee, pressed it to his lips, and casting his fine eyes upwards; whispered an ejaculation, in which I could only distinguish the name of my cousin, then rising—forgive madam the trouble I give you, this packet will explain to you what I cannot; once more adieu, and he left me with such precipitant solemnity, it was some moments before I could acquire courage to open the papers, which I found, beside a short note to me, contained a letter from Lord Ruthven to him, with his answer, and one from him to Lady Mary, which I inclose; and as they will, together, make a tolerable long epistle, conclude this from your's

C. BUTLER.

LETTER XXIV.

Colonel Moncrass to Mrs. Butler.

Madam,

THE inclosed copies will inform you of the hard fate of Moncrass; amiable friend of the most lovely of women, I bid you perhaps, and indeed most likely, an eternal adieu; I tear myself from a place, that will constantly remind me of the treasure I have lost; I am not only separated from those dear connections with whom only, my soul sought alliance; but hope, the last resort of the wretched is no more. Your cousin madam, but I dare not trust my pen, one only favor can I ask of you, and your worthy husband; when in possession of the dear blessings I can never know; when your heart recognizes your native country, when you again behold the welcome scenes of youthful hope, when you are restored to the valued society of her, *I must no more behold*, oh speak for poor undone Moncrass, tell that angel, how grateful, how devoted, yet do not, only say, I am the miserable

MONCRASS.

INCLOSURE I.

Earl of Ruthven to Colonel Moncrass.

My dear Colonel,

IT is with infinite reluctance I address you on a subject, no less interesting to me, as a man of rank in the world, than dear to me as a father.

Your amiable qualities, Colonel, rendered you a most acceptable guest in my family; relying on the unquestionable probity of your character, I imprudently introduced you to my only child; was pleased at your intimacy with her, and weakly flattered myself the congenial sympathy of two young minds so delicately formed, could not possibly be productive of any ill consequence: I left her young heart open to those dangerous impressions, which youth, are too prone to imbibe, in a constant intercourse with an amiable object of the different sex: I confided in the integrity of your principles, and forgot the necessary guard over the peace of my daughter: The natural consequence of this blameable conduct in me, is an attachment beginning, which if not timely check'd, will ruin the fortune of my child, without bettering your own.

Suffer me sir, to hint, with every regard to delicacy, that your present unfortunate situation, is, with respect to your country, unchangeable: and that I never could acknowledge a daughter, wedded to the proscribed enemy of my prince; you would therefore by attaching yourself to Lady Mary, involve her in the disgrace of your situation, render her an alien to her family, and natural inheritance; rob me of my only comfort, and end in sorrow the existence of the Countess; who would not survive such an act of ingratitude in you, and disobedience in her child: sanguine hope, youthful passion, and the power of beauty, I know attaches you to my daughter; I give full credit to the disinterestedness of your principles, and have so great a respect for your character, that I declare on my honor; young, and unprotected as you are, were you any other in respect to your native misfortune, I should be proud to raise you from obscurity, and rejoice in such an acquisition to my family: after having said this, and offered you any thing in my gift, my child only excepted, who, if your's, must be totally ruined; need I add any farther entreaties to you, to spare me the grief of feeling, all my hopes blasted; or would Colonel Moncrass gratify his own passion, at the expence of the interest, the honor, and duty; of a young creature who loves him? no! I know him better; he will rather, however hard the struggle, conquer his passion; he will write a farewell letter to the innocent, I this morning surprized in his arms; he will represent to her, how incompatible with her honor, and interest, it would be to persevere in her folly; he will give her to understand that he relinquishes all claims to her heart; because *her* happiness, is dearer to him than *his own*.

Forgive me Colonel for thus dictating to a man, whose soul is the residence of innate honor; should you ever experience a father's fondness, you will then know to what excess it will carry the mind of man. I am leaving the part of the world where you *are*,

and going where you *cannot follow*; I know you are wounded by this separation, and I know your other troubles, are doubled by it, yet you see, solely occupied by my anxiety for my daughter; I presume to impose a task on your feelings, which will add to your distress; but my confidence is in your sense of justice, your regard to propriety, and your unimpeached rectitude; those will long out-live passion, why therefore should not their influence far exceed it?—Yes my amiable young friend, I know they will; and wherever your future destiny may bear you, remember, you have in me a warm and zealous friend, who will ever rejoice in your happiness, and gladly contribute to your prosperity.

Adieu, dear Colonel, Lady Ruthven begs you will accept the inclosed, as a slight token of the maternal affection she will always bear you: and we join in every possible wish for your welfare.

RUTHVEN.

INCLOSURE II.

Colonel Moncrass to the Earl of Ruthven.

Lisbon.

My Lord,

WITH a proper sense of the honors you have conferred on me, I inclose the requested letter to Lady Mary Ruthven—yes my lord! you are perfectly right; the broken fortunes of such a wretch as Moncrass, are beneath her acceptance: nevertheless, were I not too well convinced of the certain injury to *her*, of an union with *me*, no power should induce me to forego the first, and only desire of my soul; but I resign it my lord, not to you, not to the *world*; but to *her*.

Lady Ruthven honors me by her friendship, she will however pardon my returning her favors unopened, I have no doubt of the magnificence of her spirit, she has only mistaken the object; I can owe nothing to the Countess, or your lordship, but the respect with which I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient servant,

MONCRASS.

INCLOSURE III.

Colonel Moncrass to Lady Mary Ruthven.

Lisbon.

IF the trembling agitation of my whole frame, should render this address illegible; if the hard lesson taught by honor, and enforced by prudence, should take from me the power to delineate my feelings, the lovely, and ever beloved Lady Mary, will have the goodness to believe, innumerable as may be my other deficiencies, I am sensible of none, in my respect, my ardent esteem for her.

Lord Ruthven madam, permits me to address you, to bid you a final adieu; but believe, most adorable woman, were I not self convinced, *your honor, your happiness*, as well as that of your noble parents was at stake; did I not know, that the uniting your fate with an alien to his country, a man, branded with the name of rebel to your prince, whose scanty, and precarious pittance, you would be miserable to share; no power on earth should prevail on me to resign the dear hope, which lifted to more than mortal joy, the soul of Moncrass, this happy morning: but oh madam! it is too sure, that your certain ruin would be the result of your noble preference, of such a wretch as myself.

I have figured to my imagination, all the probable, as well as possible consequences of an union, which thrills my soul to rapture, while in spite of myself, it will float on deceitful fancy; alas, Lady Mary! there needs not the exaggeration of family interest, pride, or parental authority; nor any of the numerous prudential objections, the opinion of the world will justify; *I know I feel* I am wretched, but I will not involve you in my misery: I see you at this moment, *mentally*, and imagination shrinks appalled from the trial, deprived of the delicacies, the splendour, and even the necessaries, you cannot without injury to your tender constitution, and lovely figure, give up; and should I bear that graceful form, to a country where my own adoration, would teach the unlettered savage, the power of beauty; how could I hope, in a climate so unfavorable to health, with accommodations so inadequate to your birth, and rank; you would not fall an early sacrifice to bodily and mental fatigue? you have no conception of the hardships which are the companions of my obscurity; I see you droop under the intemperate heat of the sun, I hear you regret your absent parents, I feel your tears, even *now* in scalding drops on my heart; I confess my cowardice; I dare not reduce you to the miserable level of the wretched,

MONCRASS.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.