

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscribed 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. III.

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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

LETTER L.

Agnes to the Lady Abbess St. Lawrens.

Greenwich.

I Have hitherto, my beloved St. Clare, and lady Abbess, been successful in my plan, but am unfortunately prevented from immediately putting the most important part of it into execution; which is that of setting out on my long'd-for return to you.

When I concluded my last letter (which from what unhappy cause I am yet to learn I dare hardly hope has reached you) I told you, Monsieur Mitard was on the point of going out to attend on some female acquaintance, but recollecting, as I supposed) the commission he had received to watch my motions, he suddenly pleaded an engagement and returned.

I had put up, in as small a compass as would contain them, a couple of dimity dresses, and some linen; and descended softly with it, as far as the front parlour, which apartment is occupied by the woman of the house, where the Mitard's lodge, who luckily happened to be out of the way: I had hardly time, when I saw the man return, to lay down my bundle, before he approached me, and begged to have the honor of entertaining me one half hour; I understood this request as a pretence for keeping me in his sight, and with great affected indifference, walked up again into their drawing room.

I know not how to wound you with the humiliating recital; the man actually had the effrontery to make me a flaming declaration of love—offered immediately to place me out of the knowledge of Lord Morden, who was a very *bad man*, and of his wife, who also was a very *bad woman*, and in short, gave me additional proofs, had those been wanting, that it was quite time for me to get out of their hands.

I smothered my indignation as well as I could, but Monsieur was perfectly informed by my looks, that his passion was not likely to be successful, and he had in consequence of that information the assurance to threaten me with his important resentment.

I left him apparently much enraged at the sang froid of my behaviour, and traversing the room in great heat; to my inexpressible joy he threw the door after me in scorn, and I took that opportunity again to slip down stairs, stepped into the parlour for my bundle, and having gained the street, deliberately walked to a stand of coaches, and

ordered one to drive to Greenwich; where on enquiry I found Mr. Arnold was well known, and easily procured directions to his house.

He was at home; and I was conducted into a large parlour, where, though little more than nine o'clock, the family were at supper.

I had, during my ride, so far altered my first plan, that I did not open myself without reserve to Mr. Arnold, as I had intended; but told him simply that a Mrs. du Bois, had recommended his packet to me, as the quickest conveyance to France, whither I was desirous to return, and requested to know his terms for the voyage: Oh! he said, we should not fall out, he had always done Mrs. du Bois's business, and he believed she would not upbraid him with extortion.—I then asked him when he should go. It was not quite certain, he said, as he waited for the arrival of some India ships, he was engaged to meet, and could not sail before they arrived.

That, I acknowledged, was inconvenient to me, as I had come to Greenwich expecting, from Mrs. du Bois's account, to have an immediate passage, and was not provided with lodgings: Mrs. Arnold believed I might be accommodated next door with an apartment; and offered to send her servant to enquire.

I have not been able to account for it, for this woman is one of the most unamiable dispositions I have ever known; but during the absence of the servant, after having fixed a pair of most forbidding eyes on me for some time, she whisper'd her husband, a plain, honest, ignorant man; and at length (observing I believe my looks were not the most tranquil) said, she hoped I would not make myself uneasy, for that if Mrs. Fanning's rooms were engaged, I should be welcome to an apartment in her house, 'till Mr. Arnold sailed.

I was lucky enough to express my acknowledgments in a manner that seemed to gratify her; from a slight invitation, she proceeded to insist upon my being her guest; and immediately sent another servant to put an end to the treaty with her neighbour. A chair was then set at the table, and hearty invitations given me to join their meal, which I was too much agitated to accept, having a violent headach: I retired early not to rest, but to unburden all my cares to my beloved friends; who if ever I should see them again, will be convinced their Agnes truly repents the first, and only concealment, she ever made from them.

There sat at table, madam, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold; a young woman about two and twenty their only daughter, very much dressed, and rather handsome; three boys their sons, and a pretty young creature about seventeen, who very much excited my curiosity; they call her Betsy, and affect to treat her as an inferior, at the same moment, when she sits perfectly at ease, commanding the whole family—she has an air of great dignity, and at times pride—but in general there is an arch sweetness, and playful gaiety in her manner, which renders her very pleasing: I could not help fixing my attention so much on her, as to draw the observation of Mrs. Arnold, who followed me to my chamber, for the sole purpose of informing me—Betsy was the orphan daughter of a poor clergyman, who

was come up to London to be apprenticed by the fund, a charitable institution as she explained, for the benefit of the children of the inferior clergy.

Now, continued Mrs. Arnold, both Mr. Arnold and myself are very tender-hearted; and so we thought we mought as well keep the poor thing, and make her useful in the family; she has agreed indeed to pay for her board, 'till some friend comes to town, from whom she has expectations, but as I say, Lord! where is she to get money? and so I tell her, but she is so flighty, and whimsical, there is no such thing as making her think; she was recommended to us by Mr. Arnold's sister, who lives with a great lady in the country.

I thanked Mrs. Arnold for her communications; who hinted, that the reason she favored me with such an early mark of confidence, was, for fear I should, as many others had done, take Betsy for a young woman of fortune, and her Nancy's equal.

Surely, my dear madam, I have not in every article, forgot your moral instructions; whatever may be Mrs. Arnold's natural disposition, her behaviour to me, has been hitherto civil; nay, it has even been friendly; yet my heart retreats from the union of mind, such conduct *should* create; she is indeed extremely low bred, and, like her husband, ever barbarously abusing the English language, by misplacing the sound of letters, and mistaking, not only the pronunciation of words, but their meaning also; by which means their conversation, is a compound of vulgarism, and ignorance: but, as it is my fate, or rather the effect of my folly, that I should be cast among people so very different from the dear, the polite, and friendly society, where I received my first ideas, I must reconcile myself to what I cannot, now, avoid: whatever evils, or mortification I may in the world be subject to, I *know where* I shall be at peace.

I am going my dear friends, sweet, and ever respected guides of my youth, to implore the protection of the holy virgin, may be extended to my soul; and that I may live and die, in the pure practice of every virtue, you have taught me to revere: and oh! my dear lady Abbess! honored St. Clare! may I venture without injuring those virtues, to repeat to you a name, never out of my thoughts.

I am, it is true, displeased, and with reason; Edward Harley, that amiable! that accomplished! that modest young man! dared to accuse Agnes de Courci of immoral conduct; he presumed to wound my ears with tales of the blackest calumny, levelled against my better self; and had the barbarity to tell me, he was himself of the number of my calumniators; for this I certainly ought to hate, to despise him—ah! madam, dear St. Clare! I am a weak, a very weak creature; it is thus I reason with my wayward heart; but spight of all my efforts, his elegant form, his delicate manners, and the rectitude of his principles; form an agrément, that rushes between my reason and my imagination, wholly obscuring the one, while the other, brightens into rapture.

I wish he was known to you; I wish—ah how vainly! he had once presented himself at your grate; you would surely think favorably of him; his address is at once, simple and refined—and his voice—do you not remember how St. Clare once expatiated on the power of a melodious voice?—“It is pleasant even in common conversation, it

softens severity and it enhances kindness (said the dear saint) but when we hear the comfortable tenets of the scripture—the absolution of sin, pronounced in a voice of melody, it pierces with delightful extacy into the soul.”

Let me beloved St. Lawrens, hide in your friendly, your maternal bosom; the burning blushes of your Agnes, when she confesses, this man—this Harley’s voice, has that very effect on her, which the bishop at Abbeville’s has on St. Clare—it continually vibrates on my ears, and even when I sleep, it is ever present to my ideas—observe madam, in extenuation of his offence, he was himself in despair at the situation in which the barbarous tongue of slander had placed me; he wished to reform me, to convince me of the errors he supposed me facinated with; he offered me, the protection of a virtuous woman, his sister; and he pleaded, heavens with what eloquence! the cause of an injured, deserted matron.

Alas! madam, was it for him, whose own open heart, might have been scrutinized by infant candour, to read mine? to develope, the labyrinths in which human cunning conceals its depravity? how often have I seen his fine eyes fill, as he contemplated my features; how frequently have the scalding messengers of pity drop’d on my hands; and oh! how many, many times, have the agonies of his swelling heart, obliged him to rush out of company; and when I have followed—have I not found him despairing, and frantic; the cold drops standing on his forehead; yet has the voice of your Agnes, instantly calmed the tempest of his soul; and by the mere simple efforts of common civility, held all his unruly passions, captives in the bonds of reason.

Suffer me, dear madam, to carry you in imagination with me to his own little demesne; delight your ears with the faltering blessings of the old, the fervent gratitude of the middle aged, the lispings, and familiar, but not less sincere good will of infancy, all following the steps of my Harley; while his own effulgent eyes, bright with the emanation of benevolence, and charity, dares turn from those grateful dependants, to that *being*, who judges the *motive* with the *act*, in equal confidence and security.

Let us wander through the delightful groves which surround his neat dwelling, where we shall be surprised into a pleasing wonder; religion, romance, and passion; seem to have blended their powers in the decorations, and ornaments of this sacred solitude: behold my Harley, with what manly sense he distinguishes, with what true taste he explains, with what sensibility he glows, and with what reverential ardor he preserves the reliques of fond affection, bequeathed him by an amiable and maternal friend.

Oh! madam, pity your

AGNES.

LETTER LI.

Agnes in continuation.

Greenwich.

THESE people, the Arnolds, do not grow in estimation on acquaintance, yet to *me* they are civility itself.

I am persuaded there is more in the character of the young person I described to you than they know; she treats me with a familiar kind of affection which is far from displeasing, but the family are so much the objects of her contempt, that I am obliged to look exceeding grave, to keep her in any kind of order when she speaks of them.

I was passing the door of her apartment this morning, when she called after me—Miss—Miss Thingimy, come here, I want to speak with you. I gravely asked, if it was *me* she addressed?

She answered in the affirmative, quite unembarrassed, and as soon as I entered, shut the door; then pointing to a table, where lay a piece of cloth, and a boy's shirt not very clean, do you know, asked she, very seriously, how to cut out a shirt?

I could not help smiling at the simplicity of the question, and yet upon consideration I really did not, she looked earnestly in my face—why child! you are as ignorant as myself then, but keep your own secret; for if you acknowledge so much to Madam Fussock, you will be set down as a mighty worthless body; come, do be seated, and let us try if we cannot contrive it between us—here continued she, (taking the shirt up between the handles of her scissars) this is the pattern.

I protested my inability—well now, that is so stupid.

I thought, said I, your mother who had so large a family (she burst into an immoderate fit of laughter) would have taught you those little matters.

To be sure, answered she, 'tis mighty odd she did not—if—if (smothering another laughing fit) she knew herself. All this time she was turning and twisting the cloth—no, 'twont do, I'll even go and return Madam Fussock her cloth, and give my young lady a lesson on her humstrum, do you understand music?—a little.

Well then, by way of conferring a favor on you, for which I expect you will be very grateful, I'll shew you a lesson, I have been composing for my pupil's improvement.

This was a sheet of music paper, filled with such a combination of flats, sharps, quavers, and semibreves; that I saw directly she was turning the science into ridicule, or rather playing on the folly of the Arnolds.

Come, said she, snatching the paper out of my hand, I see you know too much—

And if, said I, I were to acquaint Mrs. Arnold?

You dare not.

How madam?

I know you dare not, your heart will not let you.

Why should you fancy my heart will do more for you, than yours for Madam Fussock as you call her?

Oh! that is quite another thing—we are of a different order of beings.

Indeed! but methinks you should speak for yourself only, without venturing to pronounce for me, who am so great a stranger.

Really child, answered she, seriously, you mistake the thing very much—you are no stranger to me at all.

Recollect, madam, the consequence it is of to me to be concealed, and you will conceive the alarm I felt, when the volatile girl made so unexpected a declaration.

Not a stranger to you, Miss, replied I, very coldly, pray where have I had the honor of being known to you before?

Oh! no where, but there is, I have heard say, one infallible rule, by which spirits of a certain description, become familiar with each other; and that is by the sympathy of generous, and elevated sentiments; you, I perceived within the first hour of our acquaintance, are of that description; no matter what I am, you will know some time or other; but *such as I am*, you see I cannot level myself to the people I am with: yet, though I do not esteem, I do not hate the creatures; they amuse me, and while they fancy I am the object of their ostentatious charity, they are in reality slaves to my whim, and caprice; they like me in spite of the tricks I play them, and are so fearful of disobliging me, that the authority, and influence, I insensibly gain over them, is a confirmation of my favorite thesis, “the power of sympathy,” which even these stupid people cannot resist; they think me the orphan daughter of a poor country parson, whose large family kept him in a state of too much poverty, to provide for his offspring: and to a young girl, so situated, the asylum their family affords would perhaps be very acceptable. They are of the order of *little* great folks, who would surely be proud to make a dependant *feel* their obligation; yet you see, they are actually afraid of disobliging me, they are no less civil to you, and what can the involuntary humanization of such savages proceed from, *but sympathy?*

They *take* you for a poor parson’s daughter, then you are *not* so in reality, said I, looking earnestly at her.

She coloured excessively, and answered,

Miss Mary Farquar, for that I think is your travelling name—when you are disposed to exchange confidence with me, I will be ready to renew this conversation; ’till when, I wish (laughing) for your own sake, you could cut out a shirt; I suppose you can embroider, filagree, draw, and all the useless et-cetara’s; but let me advise you to learn to work plain work; which the good lady of this mansion, avers is the ground of all female perfection; and so Miss Mary Farquar—bon jour.

You will confess, my dear madam, this young person is an extraordinary character; but I dare not trust her too far; she is not only young, and volatile, but giddy, and thoughtless to excess.

Mr. Arnold, and his wife, are doatingly fond of their daughter, who is rather a handsome girl; but unhappily, has heard from her ill-judging parents, so much of her beauty; and from her infancy, been taught to expect so much from its influence; she has rejected several young men in her own station of life, in expectation of attracting the regard of some person of fashion; which has been her invariable pursuit, from the age of seventeen, and which she still flatters herself will happen: Betsy as they call her owes, they fancy, her irresistible power of pleasing to her accomplishments; they are therefore exceedingly anxious, Miss Arnold shall equal her in those; as to person, there is, they think, no comparison.

The poor beauty, as Betsy calls her, is really in a pitiable situation; every day opens with fresh hopes, which the evening is sure to prove falacious; new dresses, and graces, are constantly exhibited at the windows, and in walks up and down the dusty road; the hill itself (where they live) is not more known, than the face of Miss Arnold; yet the man of fashion, who is to carry this prodigy off in his coach, does not appear; and thus kept on the edge of expectation, a continued series of disappointment, not seldom ruffles a temper, that would naturally be submissive, and un aspiring; if she had not the misfortune, to be in her own estimation, and that of her friends—a *beauty*.

You will my inestimable mistress, forgive me for beguiling my anxiety, by a description, which shews in a new light, the importance of those obligations, your care of the early progress of my education, lays on me: to your elegant accomplishments, your refined sense, and moral virtues, it is, that I owe the little all which is valuable in me; and it is to those I am indebted, for the fortitude which supports me, in my present disagreeable situation.

I have just four guineas in my purse; the longer Mr. Arnold defers his voyage, the larger will be my debt to him: he will land me in any port on the French coast; I wish to go to Bologne, because, if my ill stars do not shed their malignant influence over every act of my life; I shall find the good father Dominick there; that worthy friend of St. Clare, who was indeed her cashier, as well as friend, from my first remembrance; I have no doubt of his readiness to receive me into his protection, 'till I can throw myself at the feet of my dear lady Abbess—'tis however a tedious interval, 'till I set out on my long desired journey; and were the Mitards to discover me, I dread least the power of Lord Morden, united with their depravity and cunning should be successfully exerted, to detain me here, and perhaps even deprive me of the humble protection Mr. Arnold's roof now affords.—Oh! madam, were every young woman who voluntarily abandons the protection of her real friends, to encounter the difficulties, and anxiety, to which I have been exposed; and were those to be publicly known, would it not have the happy effect, of rendering the tranquil home, dear to the daughters of innocence? how should I now support myself, were I not conscious that I had a plea to offer in vindication of my conduct, the pure in heart will not totally reject? was the guilt of disobedience added to the present distresses of my mind, I know I should sink under them.

I long, yet dread to see you; how shall I approach St. Clare, if she is displeased with her Agnes? how shall I bear to see her languid countenance, clouded with vexation for me? how meet the benign eyes of Madame St. Lawrens, turned, for the first time, in

anger on her, for whom she has done, and felt so much? oh! spare the poor culprit! her whole life to come shall be devoted to penitent obedience: yes, Harley! even thy seducing image, shall be torn from the soul of Agnes, thou charming heretic! yet I will pray for thy conversion, I will venerate thy virtues, and never forget the emanations of goodness which graced thy every look; these are the oblations due to a soul like thine, and in these, my dear St. Lawrens, my beloved St. Clare will join their

AGNES.

LETTER LII.

Agnes in continuation.

THE event I most dreaded is come to pass; that Lord Morden, indefatigable in wickedness, has discovered me, and I am breathless with terror, with astonishment! yes my dear respectable, venerable friends, your Agnes is actually in dread of being sent to a common prison, the vile Mitard! has sent me a demand from his attorney of fifty pounds—a mistake, occasioned by the vanity of the Arnolds, I have reason to think preserved me this day from an insult which is too complicated in horrors to be thought on; the night is now overcast, and I have to determine, only, whether I will tell Mr. Arnold my situation, or again by escaping from hence continue a migration to which I see no end: what will become of me? whose offences are thus visited on my devoted head? what have I done to deserve thus to be abandoned, to misery, and despair?

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold are out; I therefore will once more try to compose my agitated thoughts, by addressing them to you.

Betsy, the little inmate whom I mentioned in my last, generally sits in what they call Miss Arnold's apartment; it consists of a sitting room, and bed-chamber, and contains the books, music, and work belonging to her; and there is a large light closet shuts in at one end, where Betsy sleeps; the back of the house is by much the more pleasant, and there for obvious reasons, I mostly am; Miss Arnold as I before said, is always stationary at one, or other, of the front windows.

I remarked this morning, Miss was particularly fine; and that some significant looks, were exchanged between the father, and mother, with nods, winks, and allusions I did not understand, nor was I at all ambitious of being honored with their confidence: and therefore as soon as the breakfast equipage was removed, I left the room.

I was followed on tip-toe by Betsy, who beckoned me to her apartment, and there very seriously told me, *the Lord* was come at last—not to you, continued she (seeing me change colour) but to our beauty.

He has been loitering about, these three days, waiting an opportunity no doubt to throw himself at her feet—the soft soul rides by in his vis-a-vis, leaves it at the inn, and then comes to reconnoitre on foot; nay, perceiving perhaps some incredulity in my looks, it is an absolute fact—we cannot be mistaken—we have seen him ourselves—and the chandler shop woman where *we* deal having found out his quality from his own footman, came and told the whole affair to Madam Fussock: our fortunes are all made, and moreover when Miss Arnold is a countess, I shall be, an please you, her ladyship's humble companion.

This story, related with a humourous gravity, I know not why, affected me in a strange manner; I felt myself chilled, and burning alternately; I trembled, and turned so sick, I was obliged to open the window for air.

Heavens! cried the trifler, what are you about? do you know, that we are so tenacious of our conquest; so afraid another pretty face besides our own should be visible; that Madam Fussock has given positive orders, no window shall be opened, nor any one, save our beauty, be seen at the front of the house? not but, I am determined to have a peep to day let the lord take it as he will.

I still continued faint, and did not remove from the window.

Oh! very well, continued Betsy, I see you won't mind me, you want to rival Miss Arnold, and as I live, here comes the old lady.

As I had no idea, the orders so ludicrously repeated by the prating girl, had been really given; I continued at the window, but I was soon made sensible of my error.

Miss Farquar, said Mrs. Arnold, out of breath with passion, I think I am mistress of this here house; and for to let you, for to know; I mean to remain so.

Who disputes your authority madam, said I? with as much humility as I could assume.

You Miss, you do, how dare you presume for to open that there window, ven I ordered it to be kept shut? but I see what you would be at Miss, I see through your little hartifices, and sist on your immediately perviding yourself vith another login; I'll not keep folks in my house, for to take the bread out of my child's mouth, I promise you.

Bless me, madam! answered I—I do not comprehend you.

Get yourself a login, Miss, you comprehend that I suppose.

Understand, my dear lady Abbess, that this woman's passion, and her voice were both raised at every sentence she uttered; and the last was delivered with such an inflamed countenance, and loud tone of voice, that frightened at her violence, and dreading to what further lengths it might be carried, I burst into tears; and though my sickness, and faintness returned, was hastening out of the house, as fast as I could go.

Stay, Miss Farquar, cried the little generous Betsy, stay for me; and then tying on her straw bonnet, good bye, dame Arnold, when your house is again honored by the residence of a gentlewoman, learn to treat her better.

Why pray, Miss Pert, answered Mrs. Arnold, where are you going? nobody said nothing to you.

I advise you, Mrs. Arnold, answered she, in a haughty tone, not to insult *me*, you know I won't bear it—call me by my name if you please—I shall go with Miss Farquar—don't imagine I will be made a prisoner of, and be deprived of the fresh air, because your daughter has captivated a lord; God help you! I wish you knew them as well as I do, you would then know that one honest man is worth fifty lords, whose chief merit is their title; not but there are exceptions, and many too—this new idol of yours may be one for aught I know or care—but I assure you, neither a lord, nor all the titles in the world, shall give you authority to insult me.

Why child, did I affront you? replied Mrs. Arnold, in the usual mild key, to which the spirit of my little friend is sure to reduce her——

Yes you did—when you fly into your foolish, vulgar passions, with a young person, who I am sure is much your superior, and a gentlewoman, before my face, and in my apartment, it is an affront to me—and I won't stay in your house a moment after she quits it.

Nay Betsy, you know I always respects a *gentlewoman*, because I am *one myself*.

So you ought, what signifies your telling me of your father, and uncles, and the rest of the 'squires of your family; if you discredit your birth, by ill treating a young lady, who is under the protection of your roof.

Well, Miss Farquar, you *may* stay, cried the vulgar woman, half proud at the hint of her gentility, and half humbled at the concessions, the generous girl had extorted from her.

O fye, Mrs. Arnold! is that the way you apologise for the excess, to which your passion transported you? Miss Farquar does not wish to stay, and I am sure will not; except you make a proper acknowledgment for the errors of your indecent passion.

I stood, during this conversation in silent wonder, at the influence the little pleader had over our turbulent hostess; whom she actually prevailed on to ask my pardon, and then civilly turned her out of the room, on pretence, that we were going to be very busy, in contriving a new head-dress for Miss Arnold.

Poor stupid, vulgar wretch, said she, shutting the door, I wish we had gone; I am tired of them I assure you.

My tears would flow, although I did all I could to repress them; the sweet girl kissed my cheek, and begged me to be comforted, till she caught the infection from me; but her spirits which are very strong, could not bear like me to vent her tears in silence; she was seized with violent hysterics, and continued very ill the whole morning: Mrs. Arnold and her daughter were both so sincerely concerned for, and so assiduous about her, that I most cordially forgave her passionate behaviour to me: they are certainly very fond of her, and it is hardly possible to be otherwise, she is very amiable; but to proceed in my unhappy story.

The post arrives twice each day with the letters from London; and Mr. Arnold's back gate being the one next the town, the man rings at that; it so happened the gate was open, and I was crossing a court which separate the house, from the garden, at the moment the post-man came, and read aloud the direction of a letter, *To Miss Louisa Fermer*, said he, is there such a lady here? I don't know what I answered but in my fright took the letter, and ran with it to my chamber; it contained

Madam,

Mr. Mitard having directed me to demand from you the sum of fifty pounds, due from you, to him, for board and necessaries, I am to acquaint you, if the said sum is not immediately paid, I shall arrest you without further notice. I am, your humble servant,

Thaves-Inn.

J. Capus.

Again the same *sick* and faint sensation, which had seized me before returned; and I was so indisposed, I was obliged to go into the garden for air: I had not been out five minutes, before Betsy ran towards me, with every mark of terror in her countenance.

Oh dear Farquar! cried she, help me over this wall, let me make my escape any how, any where, I am undone! that wretch Lord Morden!

Lord Morden repeated I, sinking on the grass.

Oh lord! yes! he has found me out, for heavens sake, dear Farquar, how shall I get away?

Oh said I—I fear it is *me* he has found.

You—answered Betsy, why what business has he with you? does he want to marry you too?

Oh! no! no! would to God! I was an hundred leagues off.

Oh! so do I a thousand, but why are you so alarmed? if you are not in danger of being forced to marry Lord Morden, you are not half so unhappy as me! and the poor thing threw herself down by me on the grass-plot, and again we wept together.

We were in this situation, when Mrs. and Miss Arnold entered the garden.

Oh! cried Betsy, throwing her arms round me, they are coming to fetch me, but I won't go, I'll die first.

Rather, said I, their business is with me.

We were however both mistaken; they were in deep (and as it should seem by the mutual smiles, of mother and daughter) well-pleased discourse; so entirely indeed were they engaged by the subject of their conversation, that they passed on without seeing us, or suspecting any person was near, to a garden seat, which being shaded by jessamines, woodbines, and other creepers, hid them from our view: but interested as we were, you may believe we listened with great eagerness, and caution to their conversation.

For my part, said Mrs. Arnold, I think now, the sooner you sees him the better—delays are dangerous—many things happen between the cup and the lip—he has declared himself, and therefore I would have your papa come plump to the point.

Law! mamma, answered Miss, that would be vastly ridiculous; and besides I should like to be a little cruel at first, and pretend I didn't like to change my condition, and so you know he will be unhappy, and follow me to the assembly, and dear! how the Miss Keelys, and the Miss Tobyns, and the Miss Parkers will swell with envy, when Lord Morden's carriage is called.

I had here a violent pinch from Betsy.

Well my dear, fur be it from me to want to get rid of my Nancy—she shall do as she pleases; only as I said before delays are dangerous.

But then you know, mamma, if he opens his purposals to papa, he can't you know go back; or now I think of it, suppose we pretend papa did not know of it, and so make it a runaway match.

Fiddle-de-dee of a runaway match, no, no! I'll have every thing fair and above board: my lord spoke like a lord—madam, said he, there is a young lady under your ospital roof, and you will confer the greatest favor on me, if you will suffer me to speak six words to her.

Betsy, and I, sighed responsively—she continued—

My lord, says I—I shall be very happy you will honor my house so far as to walk in—was'nt that right? appealing to Miss.

Oh yes, certainly, vel—

Vel then, you see, he comed into the parlour, and I was so sorry the curtains and chairs were cased up, and the carpet kiver'd, but howsever my lord didn't mind that a bit—but says he, you bind me my dear ma'am, says he, ever to your service by this condescension; I love this inexorable beauty, would make her mistress of my fortune—but she flies my ardent love.

There! said Betsy, I motioned to her to keep silence, Mrs. Arnold went on—

Slights my passion, and will not suffer me to breathe my vows at her feet—pity amiable Mrs. Arnold, a despairing lover; and down my lord fell on his knees to me.

Law, said the delighted daughter, I wish I had been there. Vel—

Vel then, says I, my lord, says I, this here is a very serus business.

Only five minutes, let me have an opportunity to urge my passion five minutes and—

Indeed! interrupted Miss, he will be mistaken, I shall not consent in many five minutes, I assure him, five minutes!

Vel, continued the mother, so I told him as it was a thing of too serus a nature, to resolve on in a minute; but I would consult my husband, and if he consented, his lordship mought call to-morrow morning, an ve would talk to his lordship; and dear me, he was so thankful, and bowed so handsomly all the vay he vent out, and made so many apologies for troubling me, as I vaited on him to his viz, a viz, vel after all there is nothing like a downright parson of quality.

Not if he is a lord, mamma, and away the happy pair walked, still harping on the lord, 'till they were out of hearing.

Now said Betsy, as soon as they were gone, I would give my little finger to be sure Miss Arnold is really the object of Lord Morden's pursuit, what think you Farquar?

I shook my head.

Do you know him? said she.

A little.

Don't you think him a shocking creature.

You know him I perceive.

Not a little, I was once in danger of being married to him, and if he were to get me into his odious power again, I fear I must rival our beauty whether I would or not.

My curiosity was now so raised about my amiable little friend, that I told her, I was ready to exchange confidence with her, which she eagerly agreed to—but added she, with a charming naivete—I shall have such a vast deal to say, not that my story is long, but (sweetly blushing and casting down her eyes) it really requires so many apologies, and so much indulgence, that I dare not drop my mask, without a long prayer for mercy; and see those foolish things are returning, come to my room at bed time, and I will tell you all by moonlight, when you can't see me blush.

Mrs. and Miss Arnold then came up, so brisk, and debonair, that all my apprehensions for myself vanished for the present—but to-morrow, oh! what may not happen to-morrow: I hear the family who have been walking in the park return; Betsy's history may perhaps determine me, and fix the waverings of my mind, which are wholly

the result of cowardice; I tremble at the dangers I have past, and my heart recoils when I reflect, it is possible they may not be equal, to what may yet be fated for your

AGNES.

A man belonging to Mr. Arnold is going to London, I therefore send off this letter—God grant it may meet you at Paris.

LETTER LIII.

Edward Harley, Esq; to Mrs. Butler.

Hermitage.

THE mortal part of your Harley is returned to his native country; harrassed with grief, fatigue, and disappointment, the soul-less fugitive again addresses his partial, his ever dear Butler, and dearer Caroline: he asks consolation from their friendship, and indulgence from their affection.

Whither dear object of my adoration, art thou flown? return, return to thy distracted Harley.

Oh Caroline! will her benign, her undefiled soul, ever bend in pity, and pardon to the wretch who durst insult her purity, with the repetition of a calumny; founded on the ever obstinate error of jealousy, and supported by prejudice? alas! I dare not hope it.

The confusion of guilt I have told you was not on her—yet she fled—threw herself (that dear enchanting form, where the soul of beauty is seen, not in a particular feature, not in the tincture of the skin, the glance of the eye, or turn of countenance; but in an harmonized combination of all that is lovely in woman) alone, on a world where she is literally a stranger.

Oh! Caroline, you who possess the best of human hearts let the story of the injured Agnes warn you, never to give up the cause of your sex, the hope of virtue, and the reputation of innocence, 'till you are sure, 'till your own eyes, your ears, your senses, not the tongue of the malevolent, convince you they no longer exist: and even then, let the value of the gem *you* possess, teach you to commiserate, the irreparable misfortune, of a sister mortal who has *lost* it.

Oh! Agnes, where now is the power of that sympathy, which I fondly said, would lead me to thee wherever thou wert? lost, sunk in the chaos of despair, into which thy absence plunges me.

I am returned to my Hermitage, but my mind refuses to acknowledge its accustomed retreats; it recognizes no spot in my grove, but that where the form of Agnes, once seen is forever remembered. Disgusted with my loved home, my humble friends, and most of all with myself; I fly, with eager avidity, to the bosom of friendship; and while I record my sufferings, and blasted hopes, fancy I hear the rational voice of consolation from my friend, and feel the genial drops of pity which flow from the eyes of Caroline: yes, my sister! indulge the laudable weakness; you will not only weep for Harley, the gentle, the injured Agnes, will also share your pity.

Filled with hopes, which the extravagance of my enraptured fancy, had anticipated, and realized, I left home the moment I had sealed my letter to you.

I travelled post, changing horses oftener than it was either needful, or customary, stopping only to make enquiries at the different stages, for the angel I was pursuing. The first fifty miles towards Calais, I could hear no kind of tidings of her, and the ardor of my hopes consequently a little abated: at G—— it was my misfortune to hear, that a lady, young, handsome and alone, had taken the route to Calais; I followed and traced her from inn, to inn, till she embarked on board a packet, which had sailed from Dover twelve hours before I arrived; not doubting but this was my Agnes, I procured a boat, notwithstanding the wind was very tempestuous, which conveyed me across the channel; where, as I thought I should find myself awkward in the enquiries I had to make, I engaged a young fellow to attend me in quality of a linguist, who spoke English, and in every respect answered a good character, I received of him from the master of the hotel, where I stopped at Calais: from whence again I traced the lady I had followed from G——; she took her route through Lisle, and at last (happily as I then thought) I lodged her at the hotel de ——, where to my extreme joy she yet remained: I found her apartment, and without announcing myself rushed in, and throwing myself at her feet, found it was—— *not Agnes.*

The lady was surprised, but not offended.

Heavens! exclaimed I, am I deceived; is it you, madam, I have followed? and is not Miss de Courci here?

I have not the honor to know Miss de Courci, sir, answered she, in broken English.

Did you come from England, is it you I have traced from G——?

Certainly sir I have travelled that road.

Good God! said I, starting up, and motioning to leave the room—how I have been mistaken.

I, at least am not to blame, said the lady with great good-nature, and you will allow some apology due, for intruding so unexpectedly into a lady's apartment. I acknowledged the justice of her reproof, and accepted her invitation to supper.

I found her a lively agreeable little woman, whose husband, a French negociator, from Dijon, had left her in England, on a visit with some of his correspondents, and whom she expected to meet her at Paris, where he arrived while we were at supper; and the gay creature made him and herself very merry at my disappointment.

The next morning I presented myself at the convent D——, and enquired for Madame St. Lawrens; she was informed she was gone to Abbeville to visit a dying religeuse, for whom she had a particular friendship.

I then asked, if a lady, Miss de Courci, had not arrived at the convent from England?

Miss de Courci, replied the lay sister, who answered my enquiries, is she returning here? shall we again see that angelic creature?—oh! without doubt she comes to console our superior, who will greatly need it when her friend is called to the holy virgin; when sir, may we expect her?

I thought to have found her here, said I, (sighing).

Perhaps she is gone to Abbeville, answered the nun; she was as much beloved by St. Clare, as by Madame St. Lawrens, and now I recollect, there was a talk of sending for her to accompany the lady Abbess.

This was the intelligence I wanted, La Sortine procured the passports, and we began our journey to Abbeville, the next day, which we pursued with the same rapidity with which we reached Paris.

The order of the convent at Abbeville is very severe, it almost equals the famous one of La Trappe.

The sisterhood chiefly consisting of strict penitents, whose whole time, with the very little portion allowed for rest, is devoted to acts of severe penance.

The abbess St. Lawrens is a woman of high birth, and noble extraction; the order of which she is superior, is composed chiefly of women of family. Their rules are simple but not strict. The abbess's countenance is very impressing, the brilliancy of her fine black eyes, and brows, chastened by the humility of her deportment, are charmingly contrasted by her habit, which is white, with a long black veil; she has a custom of walking, and conversing, with her hands folded, which are white as her linen, and beautifully formed; this attitude you would think could not be graceful, but Madame St. Lawrens is grace itself in every sense.

My enquiries for Miss de Courci, soon gained me admittance to the parlour, where Madam St. Lawrens received me—she anxiously asked my reason for supposing Miss de Courci was there.

I mentioned Madame de Vallmont's conjecture.

How sir, said she, in very tolerable English, what is this you tell me? has my Agnes, my child left the house of General Moncrass? what can have happened? has he given her up? does he no longer protect her? has he so soon forgot the engagement of his word? is he regardless of the ties of blood? is the violated honor of his family no more dear to him?—happy St. Clare! you are out of the reach of this fresh misfortune, the few moments you have yet to breathe, shall not be rendered miserable by these fatal tidings:—no! (melting into tears) this is an event shall only be known to thy friend: where is my child? beloved creature, she knows how welcome to the bosom of St. Lawrens she will ever be—speak sir—why do you hesitate? have you more unpleasing news to tell me? know sir, you have little need of precaution—the friend, the sister of my heart, is now breathing her last—I have fortitude to bear a separation from her without repining (yet still she wept) and cannot want resolution to support me under any other event, except indeed—Agnes is no more—except her gentle spirit has been called to join the rejoicing angels, appointed to bear my beloved St. Clare to the bosom of her God.

This lady's manner and words, the tears, which notwithstanding her avowed fortitude gushed in torrents from her eyes, the stillness of the convent, where no voice but hers, nor footstep was heard; all contributed to inspire me with a solemn awe I never felt before: she continued to demand with the most anxious solicitude, an account of her dear

Agnes, while (conscious that my belief of the gross report, I now knew must be false, was the occasion of the rash step the dear angel had taken, which was so lamented by her respectable friend, who would not—who could not have been satisfied with her situation at Belle-Vue, had she not been certain it was consistent with virtue) I stood before Madame St. Lawrens, as much abashed as the original founder of the calumny could have been:—at length, however, my confusion gave way to the entreaties of the lady Abbess—I fell at her feet—and there—almost suffocated with grief and regret, made a full confession of all that had passed between Agnes and me; avowed my adoration of the dear wanderer, and in vindication of myself, acquainted her with the General's separation from his lady, and the universally credited report of his keeping Agnes as a mistress.

It is in vain my dear Butler, for me to attempt to describe to you, the astonishment and anger, depicted in Madame St. Lawrens's countenance.

What a country is yours, sir! said she, as soon as she could articulate, what people have you in it! what contracted, what narrow souls must those be, who cannot allow a virtuous attachment may subsist between the different sexes; how industrious to promote the horrid purpose of slander! how destitute of urbanity is the being who could look in the face of Agnes de Courci, and not read there the modest purity of her mind! but you say (added she, with quickness) she is returning to me—sweet child! how commendable is thy resolution! go, sir, teach your countrymen, and learn yourself, to judge charitably and live righteously! and with these words the inexorable woman left me.

It was to no purpose I implored her to grant me a second interview, I actually besieged her with letters, but could not obtain a single line in answer; yet I continued hovering about the convent, in hopes Agnes would, as Madame de Vallmont had predicted, follow Madame St. Lawrens to Abbeville.

At the end of eight days the convent bell announced the death of one of the nuns—it was St. Clare, the friend of the lady Abbess; I attended among others the funeral oration delivered by the bishop over the deceased nun, and heard an eulogy on her which drew tears from every eye.

The bishop had, he said, married when in the bloom of youth, *her* whom he was now about to bury; and except the one grand false step of her life, which he had not been made acquainted with 'till the last stage of her sickness, he believed he might say she lived without sin; her penitence (he continued) for the secret one she had committed before I first knew her, was to the last moment of her existence exemplary; in this holy sisterhood, said the venerable man, I will not particularize a sin, which was beyond all earthly atonement, they know the penitence, the piety the resignation of St. Clare; but they know not the enormity of that offence which torrents of tears could not expiate; they saw her with all the elegance of form, and grace of manners, which rendered her the object of admiration, wherever she appeared, resign the world, and all its temptations: they beheld the eagerness with which she sought a re-union with her God—they saw her tender frame, unable to encounter the strict rules of this pious society, drop into dust ere yet her days were nearly numbered; but her firm mind they also beheld, strong in faith, and in the midst of tears and repentance, sometimes illumined with *hope*; 'till at length,

the voice of mercy reach'd her departing spirit, and we all witnessed the peace of her last moments.

I made La Sortine translate thus much of this funeral discourse, to give you some idea of the prelate who uttered it, as well as the character of the *friend of Agnes*; the former is a man who honors religion; he lives in his diocese with the universal love and respect of his flock, charity, patience, and forbearance, are the leading traits in his disposition; he is an Italian by birth, and had in another country given the nuptial benediction to St. Clare, he has rose with an unimpeached character through the several gradations of ecclesiastical promotion, to the dignity he now enjoys, and has been ten years prelate at Abbeville.

St. Clare was also a foreigner, she came to Abbeville unknown, and unattended, paid her pension as a lay sister, and immediately discarding all worldly cares, clothed herself in the strict habit of the order, and went through all the rigorous discipline of the house, with a strength of mind and resolution ill adapted to the delicacy of her form, which by degrees became a sacrifice, to her penitence, and devotion.

The good bishop, influenced by the piety of her character, often visited the declining nun, and administered the consolation he thought due to the sanctity of her character: but it was not till after the arrival of Madame St. Lawrens, when the extreme unction, which *she* partook with her friend, was about to be administered, that she added some particulars to her former confessions, which recalled to the good prelate's memory, the beautiful creature, he had given to an English gentleman at Ancona, twenty years before: from this period, 'till the moment of her dissolution, which contrary to expectation was many hours; he did not leave the bedside of the dying St. Clare, but with Madame St. Lawrens, passed the solemn interval in comforting and praying by the expiring saint. St. Clare, my Caroline, was *one of the women, who formed the mind of Agnes de Courci*.

I did not attempt to interrupt the sacred sorrow to which Madame St. Lawrens now abandoned herself; but followed her after the last mass had been said for her departed friend, to Paris, where I presented myself at the grate the next morning to enquire after her health.

I was, to my infinite joy, immediately admitted.

I found the lady Abbess seated at her secretary, with several large parcels of letters before her, her eyes still swollen with weeping.

Ah! child, said she, as soon as I entered, I am in the utmost distress; here are letters from my poor Agnes, which I ought to have received long since; and heaven knows to what perils she may be exposed by the want of my assistance: I am writing to General Moncrass, if the story you have told me is true, with respect to his illness; for I find all the rest confirmed by my dear child, you will do well to hasten to him; all mystery is now, on our parts at an end; he will probably immediately clear the fame of Agnes, and place her in a situation, suitable to her natural right.

I did not neglect so favourable an opportunity of endeavouring to interest this holy woman in my behalf; I know not what I said, but her answer almost annihilated me.

Miss de Courci will assuredly obey the General, and advise with *me*, before she disposes of her hand; we will hear *your* proposals, Agnes is one of the greatest heiress's your country can boast.

I cannot describe the effect this declaration had on me; all the moisture in my body seemed in an instant dried up; a burning heat and disagreeable taste filled my throat, my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, my eyes flashed fire, my legs trembled, and I sunk down in a torpid yet not insensible state; and continued immoveable, 'till some ounces of blood had been taken from me.

The lady Abbess looked at me, I thought, with compassion,—go, said she, yours is a poor nervous system, I pity you! If you are at all interested in the fate of Agnes, you must make haste to England—heaven knows in what hands she may be, had her own wish been gratified, she would have reached this house before my return from Abbeville.—Oh! my poor child! destitute of money, friends, and protectors, what may not at this moment be her fate?

That Caroline was exactly her situation, when she concluded her last letter to Madame St. Lawrens. I engaged to return to Belle-Vue with the utmost expedition, and deliver her letters; where I arrived yesterday.

The General is still confined, and the dispatches I brought, will not I fear, contribute to his recovery; he apologised for not seeing me last night, but wished I would oblige him with my company this morning; an express was sent off by his favorite, Gallini, while I was with Madame de Vallmont, in pursuit, I doubt not, of Miss de Courci.

Ah! Caroline—the greatest heiress in England!—well, and what is there in that—let her be happy—let her be found, and peace restored to her soft bosom, and then, of what import will be the fate of

EDWARD HARLEY.

Since I concluded my letter a thought has struck me, which could I put in execution, might at least give me an opportunity of imploring her pity—I dare not hope for more nor do I now desire it—she is an heiress, a *great heiress*, these were the Abbess's words, and I still poor Edward Harley, with nothing more to offer her than love and a bare sufficiency—but sister, do you not foresee, "*all mysteries at an end*," that General Moncrass may forbid Miss de Courci's hearing the sad complaint of the hapless Harley? he has sent to London express, she is certainly there—what therefore have I to do at the Hermitage?—what at Belle-Vue?—yes—I will follow his express. I shall perhaps be with you before this letter.

Oh my restless—my agonized heart!

LETTER LIV.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

TWO odd things have happened to me, during my pursuit of your fugitive; I have in the first place been very near beating my last march, and I have recovered one of the truants of your family; Julia Neville is at this moment peeping over my shoulder: but to be methodical—sauntering home from St. James's place, my old acquaintance, Dighen the jeweller, accosted me, with his usual good-nature, and invited me to look at some fine diamonds, he was employed to reset for the duchess of ——

I hate that woman for her folly, said I, in spite of her pretty face; she has spent more money in altering her old jewels, than would have purchased a new set in addition to them; what say you, Dighen?

Not that I hate her grace for that, replied he, but to own the truth, I know nothing more fluctuating than the fashion of diamonds.

Except, interrupted I, their possessors.

True, Major, said honest Dighen, and as a proof in point, I will shew you the most beautiful pair of bracelets I ever made, which I sold to your friend, General Moncrass, not three months ago; they were presented by him to a young French favorite, who I find has left him; and yesterday she sold them to me.

How! cried I, eagerly, was it Agnes? did she sell you the jewels? are you certain?

I understand so, replied Dighen, she has been described to me, as very handsome, a French woman, and an intriguer of course; she had a young fellow with her with whom I understood, from what little I know of the French language, she was going to the continent; they spoke of a Dunkirk trader, in which they meant to take their passage, which they expected to sail this morning.

Dunkirk! and a young fellow! upon my soul, General, you have infinite obligations to me on the score of fellow-feeling; had a girl of my own served *me* so, I could not have been more enraged:—I just took a cursory view of the bracelets, enough however to satisfy me, they were the identical ones you presented your protegéé, and then posted down to Wapping; where I met one of my emissaries, who had been to my house to inform me, that a Dunkirk trader had actually sailed, and that a female passenger had been taken on board off Rotherhithe.

The rage this intelligence threw me into, was observed by an old weather-beaten son of Neptune, who begged my honor to moderate my passion, for that he would engage to overtake the trader before midnight—Come along, then, old boy, said I, putting a guinea into his hand.

Ah General! what is there besides a woman's heart, which gold cannot buy? and I firmly believe the dear things will rather throw them away, than sell them; as to their *persons*—that is—un autre chose.

Old Charon was presently ready with a strong boat, and three other stout fellows, all in high glee, in hope of my further bounty.

Just as I was stepping into the boat, a fine genteel young fellow, pale, and out of breath; came running to the stairs on the very errand which had brought me there; the Dunkirk trader was his object, as well as mine, and he would give any money to overtake her.

My fellows looked wistfully at me, and at the seat of the boat, which would conveniently hold two; I very well knew if I gave the rascals twenty guineas, they would hanker after the one they missed; and moreover, in such a tedious passage as I should have, I considered a rational being to chat with would not impede my expedition, but perhaps encourage the fellows to get on the faster; so, after I had seated myself, I gave the old fellow leave to drive his own bargain with the stranger, who presently was seated also by my side.

As we proceeded, I began to entertain strong doubts of the sanity of my fellow traveller; I attempted to draw him into conversation on various subjects, but his answers, when he did answer, were sometimes so incoherent, and at others so dejected, that I gave the matter up, and buttoning my surtout, amused myself with singing a few jolly camp songs, which highly entertained the fellows: my companion had his amusements too; he was constantly either reproaching the men for their tardiness, or urging them to be expeditious—mountains he would give if they overtook the trader; was not that her? pointing to a vessel before us—no—nor that? no—nor that? stretching himself forward, so that it was with great difficulty, we prevented his falling over the side of the boat.

Come, pull away my lads, said I, the night grows cold, d—n the ship, I wish she was at the bottom of the sea with all my soul.

The madman as I actually thought him, shuddered, for heaven's sake, sir, said he, eyeing me with curiosity, what may be the object of your pursuit, in the ship your wishes devote to such a deplorable fate?

This was the first reasonable question he asked, and I immediately answered with little hesitation, and less good manners (you will say it, General, if I do not) in an elevated tone of voice—A woman.

He started so as again to endanger a fall over the boat side.

The lady is obliged to you, sir, said he, casting a look at me expressive of resentment; a silence ensued, I resumed my song, and he gave himself up to the contemplation of the stars and the music of his own sighs.

And pray, sir, resumed I, as I have satisfied you in respect to *my* motive for taking this agreeable voyage, with so pleasant a companion; may I presume to ask in my turn, what is the magnet which draws you with such violence after this same trader?

A woman! answered he, imitating my tone and manner, so unexpectedly, that I was as much startled as he had been, I was however not displeased at his spirit.

The devil you are, said I, why I am informed there is but one female on board the ship; if therefore we should both be on the same scent, I should like to know in what manner this adventure is to terminate?

Just in what manner you please sir, replied he, very calmly; we now got in a kind of cross purpose acquaintance which suited him much better than the sort of conversation I had endeavoured to draw him into, and accordingly we got on with some spirit, till one of the fellows called to the rest,

There—that is the Dunkirk trader, where? where?—aye, that's she, sure enough, said old Charon, we were now on the tip-toe of expectation, my companion unable from agitation to speak, and myself conning over a wonderful gallant speech which I intended should be my introductory one to Mademoiselle Agnes.

We were soon long side of the vessel, and my young spark was up in a moment, but, I, who you know have a certain alacrity to sinking, and cannot climb like a cat, was obliged to ascend more cautiously: I had, however, the satisfaction to find he had not proceeded a jot the faster for his nimble ascent, as he was yet in high parley with the captain, requiring the sight of a lady; which said lady, the captain manfully swore was not in his ship.

Come, noble captain, said I—I will bet you those ten guineas, the lady you will *shew me*, is not her, this gentleman is describing; and you shall hold stakes.

The man civilly received the money, took off his hat, and led the way to the cabin. The lady, gentlemen, said he aloud, as he entered, is retired to rest, and must not be disturbed.

My companion hung back, I haled him forward, why sure, man, cried I, thou art not afraid of a woman in her night dress; he still held back, so on I proceeded.

The captain pointed to the cabin, where he whispered, Monsieur and Madame were on bed.

Monsieur and Madame I repeated—

Ah! cried my young gentleman, *then advancing*, that cannot be the lady I expected to see; have you no other on board?

The captain swore he had not.

I cannot tell how to think, said I, that the lady I expected to see, would be exactly circumstanced as the captain has represented: but however, for demonstration; and I rapped with my knuckles against the slider.

Condescend fair creature, just to show us the tip of your aquiline nose, and who should pop out her pretty French face, but that little queen of capers, Mitard.

Sacré dieu! Major, I am charmed to see you, vat be you going to Dunkirk?

To Dunkirk, no, God forbid! but pray Madame where in the name of all that's beautiful, are you going?

Oh! I am going to mine own contre, your Englis contre do not agree wid me, I am all over indispose.

And where is Monsieur, is he all over indispose too?

Ah barbare! he use me very ill, I am seperate from him, I am going to divorce.

You do very right, a woman of *your spirit*.

Ah oui Major, I learn de spirit from your charmante Englis ladies.

Bravo! but who have you with you?

Ah! monchere Major, said the bold thing, shewing her white teeth, and looking through her long black eye lashes; why ask question a lady cannot answer?

I instantly dropped the curtain, and was leaving Madame to her violent resentment against her barbarous spouse, when I recollected the bracelets; and turning to my companion, who had resumed his amusement of star-gazing, and sighing; told him I had a strange fancy, that little Mitard's gallant was of her own sex; I then desired the captain to acquaint her with my suspicions, and to let her know, I must have some more conversation with her—I cannot think added I, again addressing the young man, not immediately having in mind that he was a stranger to my affairs, how she could come by the bracelets, if Agnes is not with her.

He actually shrieked, Agnes sir, Agnes did you say? is it then Miss de Courci you seek? and are we indeed in search of the same object? and have I the honor to address Major Melrose?

All this, replied I, is very possible, nay it is more, it is true—but my recollection is not quite so ready as yours, I have no knowledge of *you*; in short, General, I found myself, I neither knew how, nor why, out of humour; you say the girl is nothing to you, at least as an object of the belle passion; yet for the soul of me I could not look with patience on such a fine young fellow, who pretended to be so much interested in the fate of your protegéé.

My name, sir, said he, bowing respectfully enough, without an atom of servility, is Harley; I was, I have reason to fear, sir, the cause of Miss de Courci's leaving Belle-Vue: my anxiety on her account is unspeakable, I have been in France in hope of hearing of her, and was just returned from thence, when I heard by accident, that a young lady who answered her description, had given the captain of this vessel five guineas, to sail a tide sooner than he intended; I followed, you see the event; my heart is innured to disappointment, but this—this last is too keen.

I cannot help it General, it is natural to me to feel my spleen rise at these sort of young fellows, when a girl is in the case; there is a certain something about them, inimical to the interest of us middle aged gents, which always raises my ire.

And pray, young gentleman, said I, a little sarcastically, what may be your *very* urgent business with Miss de Courci, supposing you had *not* felt the keenness of this disappointment?

I am disposed, answered he, gravely, to pay every regard to Major Melrose, which is due to his rank, and character; but I will not abate any thing of what is also due to my

own; you sir, have no right to put that question to me; and much less, when it is accompanied with a look, and manner, as unbecoming in you to offer, as it would be mean in me not to notice; my business with Miss de Courci shall be told only to *herself*: and how displeasing soever to Major Melrose it may be, I will not rest 'till I have an opportunity of seeing her.

Now although I could not but approve of the young dog's spirit, and although I was conscious that my petulance, was on his part wholly unprovoked, yet you know, to feel you are wrong, and to admit it to a man, is out of the soldier's creed; I look on you young man, I replied, as my guest, the law therefore of hospitality, settles this altercation for the present; we shall elsewhere, converse more freely on the subject.

When and where you please, sir, was his answer. A message from Madame Mitard, now informed me, she was waiting my commands.

I found her seated in the cabin, with young Gabriel the dancer by her side.

Monsieur, with a good deal of humour in his manner, asked if I was satisfied as to his sex; and Madame trying to blush, begged to know my further business with her.

I told her I was sorry, and faith so I was, to have interrupted such an agreeable party; but I had a word or two for her private ear.

Oh! pardon me, Major, said the confident thing, casting an amorous glance at her gallant, I have noting private from Monsieur Gabriel.

Very well, madam, then I beg to know, how you came in possession of the bracelets you sold to Dighten, the jeweller, yesterday.

Mon dieu! cried she, what be they stole? ah, I thought Louisa was sly, but I never thought she was teif—no.

Whom do you mean? interrupted I, sternly, how came you by the bracelets?

Oh! Major, rejoined she, in a fawning tone, don't put yourself in a passion, I can tell you very well; Monsieur Mitard pick up a very pretty young woman at N——, when we come from Lord Squander's fete, we keep her two, tree months, and she give us the bracelet for her bord.

Ah! where is she now? cried Harley, this must be Miss de Courci.

Madame shrug'd her shoulders, I know nothing, she leave us with Lord Morden, we never see her after.

This cannot be Agnes, said I, ironically.

No, sir, answered he fiercely, it cannot, you I fancy are not acquainted with that lady.

Oh! joined Mitard, the lady I mean was Louisa Fermer; we were now interrupted by the captain, who informed us his vessel was all this while under sail with a fine breeze, and that the boatmen begged if so be as we chose to proceed to Dunkirk, we would please to discharge them.

On this information we took a hasty leave of Mitard, who, I dare say, was rejoiced at our departure; and returned to our station in the boat, without interchanging a word

with each other: Harley could not want amusement, he had the stars, and the harmony of his own sighs: but as for me, the cold night air, and falling damps, rendered my situation very uncomfortable; and I resolved within myself as we approached Greenwich, that I would knock up Tom Hotham, who being a bachelor, I could disturb without risk, and take a bed at his house; while I was making this arrangement Harley started up, and said there was a fire that instant burst out in the house on the hill before us.

Forgetting I was a few years older than him, and not having then in my mind my aforesaid alacrity for sinking; I must needs attempt to get up in equal haste, but missing the center of gravity, was in a moment plunged into the most disagreeable cold bath I ever was in in my life.

The moon (to be poetical) had now withdrawn her silver beams; the flames of the fire increased amazingly, and cast such a glare on the water, that although as they were rowing against the tide, we were carried contrarywise, I could distinctly see the boat; though they had lost all sight of me; the men indeed were not instantly aware of the accident, and had pulled two or three strokes, before they knew it.

I saw the consternation they were in, but though some score years ago I could swim, I had now neither strength or skill to support myself against the tide; I gave myself up for a lost man, and as I could not call out, made some kind of hollow noise, which I thought would be the last salutation I should give this dear wicked world—Harley heard me, and, noble, generous fellow, threw his coat off, and plunging into the river, swam towards me, in the moment when my senses failed, and I was sinking never to rise; he grasped hold of my collar, and upheld me by main strength, 'till the watermen guided by him took us both in—for my own part, I had swallowed per force a quantum sufficit to drown some half score of your wish wash fellows, and was myself totally insensible, for many minutes after I was carried on shore.

The first thing I saw on opening my eyes, was the poor fellow I had been so pre-determinedly angry with, still without his coat in his wet linen, assisting an apothecary of the neighbourhood in my recovery: what I said to *him*, I do not remember; but this I know, that I played the woman with my eyes; I am cursed angry with the fellow, he would not be a soldier, but nevertheless, Ned Harley shall be my heir: I insisted on his changing his wet cloaths for some the landlord furnished him with, but when I was laid snug, and dry on a good bed, instead of complying with my desire, out sallied my knight errant in quest of more adventures to the fire, and in less than half an hour, rushes into my room with a lifeless female in his arms.

What the plague, Harley, have you been diving again?

No sir, I received this precious burthen from the air—the landlady and a maid-servant were summoned, who chafed her temples, and applied the usual volatiles, and conceive my astonishment, when the two sparkling blue eyes of Julia Neville open'd in a direct stare in my face.

Oh! my dear Major, cried the little bold hussey, running to my bed-side, what providence brought you and Mr. Harley to Greenwich, just in the very minute to save the life of your little friend?

I was dumb with amazement, and Julia, half frantic with joy, went on—

I thought it was all over with me, there was old Arnold, raving and fidgetting about his Nancy, his beautiful Nancy, and Madam Fussock, his wife, screaming out to save her boys, and her china, and begging, and praying her best glasses might be taken care of; the maids all busy preserving of their own trumpery, the stair case which led to my room burnt down before the noise awakened me, when I clung to the window screaming with terror; and oh! I thought then on my own dear mamma, if she had known my situation at that moment, how would her dear maternal heart, have ached, for her child; but there I stood, an example to all such whimsical girls, the grand daughter of an earl, an heiress, and the Lord knows what beside, and no soul to pity me; it was in vain that I begged for help, that I rent the air with my cries, all the rabble of the place were too busy about their friends the Arnold's to mind *me*; I knew Harley the moment I saw him, and actually believed he was an angel sent from heaven to my relief, I surprised him enough I believe, when I called on him to save me, to save Julia Neville, he ran for a ladder, and seemed to fly with me out of the window like a bird, and I was so overjoyed to find you were here, and altogether, that I lost my senses.

Aye child, said I, you lost those when you left your mother; but how the plague came you acquainted in such a place as this?

Why Major, answered the pretty pleader, I may as well tell you the truth, for you will know it; I was so tired of our moping family, so sick of that creature Lord Morden, and so longed to see Reuben: that I—I—in short I wrote to him, to come and carry me off; but I was well paid for my folly; instead of being ready to jump out of his skin for joy, if you will believe me, he wrote me a long stupid letter about honor, and gratitude due to Lady Mary; which so enraged *me*, that I was then resolved to run away, if it were only to teize *him*, and I got, but you must not ask by what means to board in the house (which is now burned) for a trifle, beside teaching the beauty, their daughter, to thrum an old spinnet and make fillagree; to be sure, if it had not been for thinking on Reuben's refusing me, and mamma's vexation, I should have led a fine laughable life there, I assure you I governed the whole family.

Oh! no doubt, replied I, but I hope, madam, you will in future learn to govern yourself.

That I never shall, returned Julia, so Major, you will act your usual friendly part, in advising mamma to give me a master; but, oh, heaven! where is Harley? there is the sweetest girl who I have not seen, where is Harley?

Gone to the fire again, answered the maid.

Good God! she exclaimed, Miss Farquar is certainly burnt, what a selfish creature was I not to think of her before, run, no, I will go myself; and she kept her word, I could not prevail on her to let the servant make enquiries after the person, about whom she was so anxious, but I directed a man and woman to follow her.

She returned so grieved, and shocked, that I insisted on her retiring to a chamber which I had ordered to be prepared for her—the poor young woman is missing, my God, General! I tremble to think how near Lady Mary was to become childless.

I could not sleep, but was obliged to remain in bed on account of a medicine I had taken, as morning approached this restraint became very painful to me, for notwithstanding I sent out every half hour, I could hear no tidings of Harley: about six I got up, and went to the place where the house had stood, which was now burnt to the ground: the sufferers were taken in by some of the neighbours, and only a few firemen and watermen about, I was shocked to hear the young woman's death confirmed, and no less shocked, than astonished at not hearing of Harley, I am half distracted, I have not to this hour been able to learn one syllable concerning him; not a house in the town, or its environs, but what I searched, and this detained me at Greenwich till noon.

I could not prevail on Julia to return to her mother; I have therefore now left her under the protection of the dowager Mrs. Butler, 'till she can make her terms with Lady Mary.

We remain in the utmost consternation about Harley, what can be become of him? Mr. Butler thinks he has by some unexpected means, or other, heard something of Agnes; nothing else, he says, would induce him to act so unaccountably; but he adds, if that be the case, we must not be surprised if we hear of him when and where we have least reason to expect it; I am willing to adopt Mr. Butler's opinion, because I think were it otherwise, if he is alive we should hear either of, or from him.

I have not yet been at St. Jame's-place, Mrs. Butler, (whom I sent to for that purpose) came down in her carriage to Greenwich, to fetch Julia, since which time I have been entirely taken up in searching after Harley, and writing to you.

I congratulate you, General, on your boy's conduct; "very hard," says little Julia, "he should refuse me, because I have a great fortune, when so many girls are run away with for no other reason in the world."

Julia has a *mind*, notwithstanding her volatility, she weeps incessantly for her companion, who perished in the flames. I gave you her little history exactly in her own words, because you should be sensible of the honor of your boy.

God bless you, my dear General, I am almost as eager to hear of Harley, as you are to recover Agnes.

MELROSE.

LETTER LV.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle-Vue.

My dear Major,

THE period is at length arrived, you so ardently wished for; the riddle-me-ree, so grievous to your open heart, is in part expounded; the inclosed letter from Madame St. Lawrens, whom you knew at Lisbon, before she was professed; and those of Agnes de Courci to her, will convince you of the laudability of my conduct to the latter, and be in part, a solution of the enigmas, which have involved us all in such distress: and there is yet another discovery, a cursed one, which will come in thunder to the heart of Lady Mary: but her good sense, and native dignity of mind, will support her under it, when she is convinced of the honor, and faith of her Moncrass; and believe me, Major, I did not feel more real rapture, at the first fond hope of possessing my beloved Mary, than I now do, as events gradually open a mystery I could not before explain.

I am still an invalid, or should have now been with you; therefore entreat you will go to the scoundrel Mitard, and take Agnes immediately under your protection; Mrs. Vallmont will join you in three days after you receive this, to conduct her to me—should Mitard presume to prevaricate about her, threaten him, put him to death.

Agnes de Courci, the daughter of Agnes! the niece of Reuben Moncrass! insulted by an opera singer!

Oh! Major, does not the christian name of this dear girl, bring to your recollection, the amiable creature you saw quit the world twenty-five years ago at Lisbon? whom family misfortunes obliged to take the veil, in all the pride of bloom and beauty? her whose abjuration of the world left such indelible regret on your mind? whose image you have sworn, rendered you invulnerable to a serious passion for any other woman? how often have you sighed forth the name of Agnes, yet could not penetrate the veil which fate had cast over her child? yes, Melrose! long did I mourn the fair apostate to our holy church, long resent the wounded fame of my family; but longer still did I lament my lost, my only sister; and the affections of a brother, a twin brother, are far more durable than the religious anger of a catholic: oh! beloved sister! when I received her from the warm heart of my honored father, her face wet with the maternal tears of her virtuous mother, did I not promise to be to her every fond relative from whom she was then parting? blessed shades of my revered parents! if ye are permitted to hover over your son, if in the mansions of bliss ye recognize the spirit of your now happy daughter, you know it was her *own* disastrous fate, not my neglect, not any omission of mine, which so fatally severed the sacred trust from a brother's protecting love—her story, Major, is a dreadful one, it will draw tears of blood from your heart; the moment the sad tale penned by herself arrives, you shall see it: but oh! she is no more! her pure spirit is now before the throne of him, *she only* had offended. Melrose drop a tear to the memory of the most

wronged of women, and grieve with me, that her injuries were known, too late for redress, or revenge; but “vengeance is mine, saith the Lord;” why then rises this swelling rage in my soul? why do my hands tremble, and the hot tear stain my paper? vengeance—ample vengeance has the almighty already taken; thou my sister, art a ministring angel, but who shall say, where the soul is, which destroyed thee?

Oh! Agnes, thy parting sighs, thy groans, thy agonies, will ever live in my memory: “be a father to my child, see that she suffer not by the ignominy under which I languish, restore her to the rights of birth and fortune, clear the fame of your dying sister:” these were the parting words of the Agnes you admired, the sister I adored; and can I forget them? oh! never, never, recover her daughter, restore her to me, openly in the face of the day, I acknowledge her, she is an honor to my family, to myself: in her, the meekness of christianity, is happily blended, with the proper dignity of uncontaminated virtue; no false pride, no undue arrogance, in her, disgusts the most penetrating observer; she has so much innate gratitude in her disposition, that the Marchioness St. Lawrens, insisted on her being early informed she was of honourable birth, and independant expectations, least a sense of obligation, should lower her in her own estimation: woud not her sensibility, said the noble Marchioness: hers, is not the pride of situation, of personal charms, or of temporal advantage; it is the true dignity of noble blood, united with as noble sentiments: and such Major, indeed is Agnes, for in every other sense, she is

“Humility herself, divinely mild,
Sublime religion’s meek, and modest child.”

The misfortunes of her mother, endear her to my soul; she is at present the very first cause with me; nay, I know not whether the domestic grief my protection of her has occasioned, is not on the whole, a matter of internal triumph to me; were I to expend my whole fortune in litigation with the heirs of Neville, what a poor sacrifice would that be, in comparison with the misery of existing near a year, disunited from my adored wife. Sister! beloved Agnes! art thou sensible, canst thou *now* know, thy brother gave up all *his* peace, to secure thine.

She came to me, Major, unattended, and unadorned; a hired chaise, without a single servant, brought her to Bath; her dress was as plain, as deep mourning could make it, she had, to avoid observation, left her nuns apparel at Paris; I had no remembrance of *her* face, but the moment I cast my eyes on her daughter, who in a plain white jacket, looked the blooming handmaid of the graces; my sister, the sister I left at Lisbon, seemed to appear before me, in the very dress, and form, in which I saw her, the day before she was professed.

And does nature then speak to the heart of General Moncrass? said a weak and tremulous voice, which called my attention to the pale mourner, whom the young Agnes was supporting; ah! continued she, gazing earnestly on my face; it is the same noble, open countenance, the same feeling heart, the same sensibility, which still graces the faultless form of Reuben Moncrass.

Nature did then indeed speak to my heart, but the countenance of the fainting female, who sunk on my bosom, did not immediately explain her claims on the soft distress that pervaded my whole system.

She revived, and her eyes opened; as she raised them to heaven, I started; she perceived she was recollected, and mildly requested her young companion to withdraw.

Oh! Melrose, what a scene followed. She sunk on her knees before me, and bending her head and body almost to prostration, hiding her wan face with her emaciated hands, could only weep and groan.

If said I, as my heart informs me, in contradiction to your altered person, you are my sister, my lost Agnes?

Oh! no! no! groaned the penitent Agnes, not *your* sister, not the daughter of the noble Earl, the virtuous Countess of Moncrass, but a poor, wretched, undone, deserted apostate.

Oh! Reuben, I dare not call thee brother; from the high pinnacle, on which thy unstained honour places *thee*, canst thou stoop in mercy, to the degrader of thy race, to her whose folly is thy reproach; to a wretch whose bursting heart, will soon, very soon be laid open, with all its secret woes, before an offended God.

Oh! Major, it was indeed my sister, it was all that grief, and misery had left of the once beautiful Agnes: it was the only treasure bequeathed me, by my honoured father; it was her, whose cheeks, while bathed in duteous tears at parting from her parents, yet glowed in modest confidence, and joy, at being consigned to the protection of her favorite brother: then, she was the opening flower, which the fell blight of sorrow had not blasted! what alas! was she now?

Need I, Major, tell *you*, that I received her, with all her wrongs, to my heart of hearts; that while I clasped her weak, and almost expiring form in my arms; I vowed to perform, religiously, and scrupulously, every behest of her heart; that I received, with solemn regard from her hands, her only child; and that I resolved, whatever it might cost me, to preserve inviolate, 'till her death, the secret history of her unhappy life; yes, my friend! this I swore, and had you seen the innate composure, which extended to her countenance; had you heard the elegant gratitude of her acknowledgements; and had you witnessed her devout thanksgiving to heaven, and her ardent prayers for blessings on her brother, and child; the impression of all on *your* memory, would have been as indelible, as it is on *mine*.

Dear saint! could I wound thee, by telling thee the difficulties of my situation? Oh! no! what barbarian would wilfully disturb the serenity of thy satisfied mind, when all thy griefs were reposed in the sympathising heart of thine only brother; had she known, that the beloved of my soul, my wife, and her lovely daughter, were the beings my promise to her, would oblige me to distress, what an entire reverse, would it have made in the system of consolation, which she fondly said, would support her in her last moments:

God be praised! she died in ignorance of the anguish I have felt on her account; and of the present situation of her daughter.

Reuben delivers you this letter; he rides express to town, accompanied by father Dominick, the good priest, who brought from the Marquis St. Lawrens, my sister's papers and certificates, which were lodged in his hands.

My son has my permission to run away with my sweet Julia immediately; if she will *now* consent to accompany him to Scotland; father Dominick will attend them, and I know, the dear girl will not object to *his* repeating the ceremony; my son will give up every thing for love, but his honor, and his religion.

You are surprised at this arrangement: Lord Ruthven will rave, and Lady Mary consider it as a fresh injury; but no matter; it is an event, necessary to the grand development, which will take place, the instant I receive the pacquet, from the Abbess St. Lawrens.

I do not suffer myself to doubt, but you will find Agnes at Mitard's; and as you will be awkwardly predicamented, to receive a young lady into *your* house, beg you will, in my name, request Mrs. James Butler to invite her to Soho-square.

Adieu, Major, if the excruciating torture of the gout, did not contradict the assertion; I would tell you I expected to be quite happy; yet how infinitely easier to be endured are the most severe bodily pains, than those which are inflicted by grief, and sensibility on the mind.

MONCRASS.

LETTER.

The Abbess St. Lawrens to General Moncrass.

Paris.

IN the short letter I wrote from Abbeville, * I informed you of the beatification of our once-loved, *now* sainted St. Clare: she died General, as she had lived; a pattern of piety, and an example of resignation; her last hours, were painful in the extreme, considering, how her fine form had before suffered, from her long, and lingering decay.

The bishop attended her last moments, with the attentive piety, which became his character; he held one cold hand, while the other grasped her crucifix, through every extremity of her dying agonies; Victoire, said she, after many hours painful struggles, fixing her dim eyes on me; —we shall meet—yes, St. Clare, dear friend of my soul!—*we shall assuredly meet*—they were her last words, the thought gave a faint smile to her features, which death could not remove.

She had given her cabinet to my care, six days before she expired; and it was my intention to have arranged, and sent her papers to you; but I am deprived of the fortitude, which I trusted, would have enabled me to fulfil her desire, and gratify you, by letters from England, which distresses me, in a manner that affects my body, as well as soul.

From what unaccountable fatality, sir, arose the cruel mistake, which has driven your niece from your protection? fate had drawn the sable veil, which her mother entreated, might conceal her birth; all mystery ended with St. Clare's life; I had already anticipated the triumph of justice, and of truth; when a young man, who followed me to Abbeville, told me an improbable story of the malevolence of your countrymen, which on my return here, I find confirmed, in the letters from my dear child.

I feel myself inclined to upbraid, to reproach you; but you are a partner in her injuries—injuries which I cannot comprehend, how you can share, without punishing; or at least, without convincing the narrow world, how infinitely her soul, as well as yours, outsoar their wicked surmises.

But perhaps, a delicate, and scrupulous regard, to the injunction of my St. Clare, rendered you silently acquiescent, under so bitter a calumny; and you waited with patience the moment when her death—but let me not call it her death, for *she* can never die—you waited then the commencement of her eternal life, to be absolved of your vow of secrecy; but sir, you have in that case, religiously performed one duty, at the expence of another.

* This letter does not appear.

Where is now the dear, the sacred deposit, which your blessed sister left in your hands? read her letters which I inclose,* the people she is with, the indignities to which she may be exposed, will, I have no doubt arouse you into an immediate, and active enquiry after her; you will certainly, when you have recovered her, declare her near affinity; you will take the proper steps to prove the marriage of her mother, and claim for her, the legal inheritance, which that marriage secures to her daughter.

But in the mean time, sir, while *we* arrange, providence may totally annihilate our plans; the object for whom we are so solicitous may suffer, she may be lost; she may fall, the victim of the evil machinations, to which she is exposed; and the fear her letters authorises, actually derange my senses.

Recover her, sir, for the love of Jesu, recover my Agnes—I cannot touch her mother's papers, while I am thus uncertain of the fate of her child—her writing, over which my eyes flow, are reproaches to my heart; Where is my Agnes? are the only words, that present themselves to my ideas, throughout a posthumous volume, addressed to you; but which from weakness, were put loose in her cabinet, and by that means, became mixed with other papers; most of them letters from the vile Neville, which I will spare you the indignity of seeing.

Oh! General, but that I am too anxious to send you my child's letters, to detain Mr. Harley; who poor youth is not fit for the world; what volumes could I write, without exhausting my feelings for her, who no longer groans, under the pressure of that fate, for which *I* still weep.

Till I hear from you, General, 'till I know my Agnes is openly, and honorably received, to her natural home, to the arms of her acknowledged uncle; or 'till she re-enters my convent, 'till her welcome return, fills every vacuum in my temporal wishes; peace will be a stranger to

VICTOIRE ST. LAWRENS.

St. Clare's paquet shall follow as soon as I have resolution to make it up.

*The letters wrote previous to Agnes's leaving the Mitard's.

LETTER LVI.

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

Belle-Vue.

HOW often have I called on my friend, and on my amiable Caroline for consolation, how often wearied you with my complaints, with my despair; and shall a day, an hour pass, when my heart is filled with the most transporting rapture—when my glad eye again reviews with joy, the dear scenes of my youthful pleasures, when the bright gleams of prosperity gild my opening prospect, and when the rapture of love, of reciprocal tenderness expand my heart, without my offering all my best hopes to the participation of such faithful such partial friends?

No, my Caroline! lifted above mortality as I really am, I feel, that *bliss*, beyond what my most sanguine hope painted to my wishes—that even *Agnes*, with the purity of an angel, united to the softest tenderness of dear complying woman, cannot render me perfectly happy, 'till you share it with me.

Yet where, or how shall I begin the extatic tale? I am lost in grateful rapture, when I reflect on the wonderful means by which my felicity has been brought about: and when I recollect the agonies which had almost deprived me of reason, I can hardly believe my happiness is real.

But is it indeed so? am I now writing in the General's library at Belle-Vue? is it certain that I have just left my *Agnes*, in all her world of beauty, mild as the gentlest zephyr's—her melodious voice which beggars all descriptions, rendered yet softer by the sweetest of all passions, her cheeks suffused with blushes, and the modest accents of avowed tenderness for her grateful Harley, yet hanging on her coral lips? oh! is all this real? yes, Butler! but let me relate to the best of sisters, and of friends how I have attained, thus suddenly, to the summit of felicity.

We find, by a letter the General received from Major Melrose, that you are acquainted with our water excursion—but it is also proper, I should tell you by what means I got the information, which carried me after the Dunkirk packet, in pursuit of my *Agnes*; oh! heaven! and is she indeed mine? the thought is too transporting, I must lay down my pen—

* * * * *

I have relieved my full heart—do not despise me, Butler—I have actually been shedding tears—and now will, with more composure, while my *Agnes* is retired with Madame Vallmont, continue my happy story.

You understood by my last, I resolved to go to London; I went post all the way, near Barnet a man called to my driver to beg he might get up behind, which was surlily

refused—it was then near midnight; but what were hours to me? nor night, nor day afforded rest to my sad spirit! the man kept running, and when he could be heard, repeated his petition, at length, and what right, thought I, have I to roll thus at ease; while a fellow creature, whose anxiety may be equal with my own, is thus kept on the rack, both by his impatience, and inability to reach the end of his journey? who knows but he is like me a hapless, deserted lover, and now in this moment experiencing the two extremes of hope and fear, and may not all the nearest, and dearest interest of his heart depend on the hour on which he arrives at the place he is so eager to reach?

These reflections had their weight, I bid the driver open the door of my chaise, and the man very thankfully accepted a seat in it; the act of kindness, totally independent of curiosity being all my aim, I immediately relapsed into the train of corroding reflection, which my fellow traveller had interrupted.

It was so late, or rather early when we stopt at the inn, that I did not chuse to break on your regular hours but ordered a bed there. The person I had taken up was so anxious to be gone, that he was as little disposed as myself, to lose a moment in compliments.

In the morning, after I had breakfasted, and was preparing to come to you, he returned to the inn; and desired to be admitted to thank me for the favor I had done him. In the course of his acknowledgements, he informed me, that he was mate of a French trader—had been to Barnet to take leave of his wife who lived there, previous to his sailing, which was to have been that day; but, that he had received a letter from the captain, informing him that a young lady, who wished to leave England immediately, had engaged him to sail with the morning tide, for which she had made him a very handsome compensation, and he required his mate to join him instantly, “now” continued the man, “as ill luck would have it, I was out spending the evening with my wife, and sister, and did not come home ’till I ought to have been on board, so that notwithstanding your kindness I have lost the voyage.”

A lady, friend? said I, eagerly.

“Yes” answered he, “some young hussey or other, she was in a plaguey hurry, to get out of the kingdom, not for any good I suppose, though they say she was devilish handsome too.”

To me, who conceived the beauty of the whole earth to center in my Agnes, this was undoubted intelligence of her; I ran, or rather flew to Tower-hill, where I met Major Melrose—I have therefore now to carry my narrative on, from the time I left Miss Neville in the Major’s apartment at Greenwich.

I returned by a kind of instinct to the fire; the family who were not injured were making great lamentation, and poor Miss Farquar was echoed from one to the other, ’till it drew the notice of several bystanders, who were informed, a young lady slept in a part of the house which had first taken fire, and the stair-case being burnt, it was impossible for her to have escaped, neither had she been seen attempting it; at that instant the part they were speaking of fell in, and poor Miss Farquar was again the object of general pity.

From this scene rendered more awful by the terrible end of a fellow creature, I was returning by the place from whence I was so fortunate as to rescue Miss Neville, (which having no valuables in it was now deserted) and was lifting my eyes in thankfulness to the providence which had preserved her, when I thought I could perceive a female figure, in a leaning attitude at the window, from whence I had taken Julia; but as the shutter was of a light colour, and the figure rested quite against it, I could not for some time distinguish.

I still continued with my eyes fixed on the place, 'till observing the flames rapidly approaching, and still more confirmed in my idea, that some unhappy being was in a state of insensibility either from fright, or suffocation; I resolved to attempt the rescue humanity demanded; the ladder I had got for Miss Neville was removed, and the people were some gathered round the other part of the building, where the Arnold's principal valuables were, endeavouring to save what they could; and others, who were friends to the sufferers, had their attention fixed on the croud, to prevent their being pilfered, of what they had saved from the fire; a few firemen, and very few there were indeed; but those were also employed in preserving the property.

I called repeatedly both on them, and on the inanimate victim, without gaining any attention from either; at last a lad came up, who asked me if I did not think *that* was a woman? pointing to the window; before I could answer, some trees which were planted at the side of the house took fire, and I then plainly discerned the figure of a female, partly resting on the window frame, and partly against the shutter, and apparently insensible to the danger which surrounded her.

I cried out with sympathetic terror—three or four stout fellows, watermen, came running towards me, and perceiving there was a life at stake very readily offered their assistance, in our confusion we could not get a ladder, although I afterwards found we had several times walked over the one I myself had left there—the object before us seemed to inspire the honest waterman, as well as myself; they dragged a large deal table from some other part of the ruins, and placing it against the wall, stood firm while I by help of their shoulders entered the window, where I found a young person alive indeed, but in a strong convulsion fit; I had not a moment to lose, I caught her in my arms, and was in the act of lifting her out of the window, when the inner part of the room gave way, the floor fell in, and I was providentially left on a kind of cross beam, which formed the bow of the room, with the person still in my arms.

I now expected every moment to be buried in the ruins; the men who had humanely assisted me, were so much frightened by the sudden crash of the building, that they retreated very precipitately from the window, nor could all my persuasions and entreaties prevail on them to resume their stations; they advised me to preserve my own life, if I could, declaring it to be an impossibility to save the woman—and with this cordial advice they left me to my fate.

The lad who was still in sight got on the table, but his efforts were too weak to be of any service; I bid him run to the firemen and prevail on them to come to our assistance,

a moment might be fatal, which he was going to do, but jumping off the table, entangled his feet in the ladder, and with a joyful cry, and an effort of strength nothing but innate humanity could give him, raised it against the tottering fabric, and I had the supreme happiness to bring my heavenly burthen safe to the ground—

* * * * *

Oh! thou Almighty, thou merciful God! thou whose inscrutable wisdom is infinite as thy goodness—and both, boundless as thy power, oh! mayest thou withdraw the breath of life from thy thankful servant, when the blessing of that hour is forgotten.

* * * * *

Sir (said the poor lad, capering for joy) my mother lives just by—better carry the woman there, she'll be out of the croud; and the good creature ran before to shew me the way.

My hair, which had got out of the ribbon was burnt, my face, and hands were singed, and blackened by the smoke and sulphur, but by supporting my angel—for, oh! Butler! it was Agnes herself partly out of the window, I had preserved her from injury.

We presently got to the house (or I should I believe, say hut) where we found the boy's mother was gone to the fire, and had left a light on her rush chair, which would in all probability, had we not arrived in the instant, have made her a sufferer by the same calamity she was witnessing at her neighbours.

There was a bed in the room on which I laid my Agnes; ah! when will my heart cease to throb when I proudly call her mine! the boy brought water, and I was beginning to bathe her temples, when he approached with a light, and I discovered—heavenly God!—I yet tremble—I cease to respire—I feel her deliverance, but Butler I also feel, and sink under the horror of the sensation, the *moment*, the *atom* there was between me and eternal perdition: to live! to exist! to breathe the vital air! and walk erect among the sons of men when *she* was no more!—*impossible!*—*impossible!*

Again the violence of my agitation breaks on my narrative—oh! my friend, I yet see her, lifeless, and deserted—the flower of the world—the pride of nature—the soul of elegance and harmony—the life and light of my existence, was within one little moment of being *lost forever*—do you not shudder, Butler?—sinks not your Caroline with terror on your bosom—oh! if you have sympathy—if you love your Harley—you will like him, fly the dreadful recollection, and rejoice it is past.

EDWARD HARLEY.

LETTER.

Edward Harley to J. Butler in continuation.

Belle-Vue.

THE first view of my Agnes deprived me of motion—I forgot her situation—the lad held the water in one hand, and the light in the other—I looked, and looked again—I examined her features—knelt before her—felt her hands—her hair—nay, I ventured to touch her cheek, it was then I perceived my hands were black, the print of my fingers remained on her delicate skin. Oh! Butler, what triumph was there in that? yet my soul glowed in transport, when I beheld the trace of my touch, on the soft down of her cheek. Avaunt, ye sensualists, you in whose gratifications soul has no share, and you whose passions are lost in the tasteless apathy, you miscall wisdom—look not on my Agnes—despise not her adoring Harley—for on trifles even lighter than this will the enamoured soul dwell with rapture.

But hark! she sighs—her eyes open—they shine on her Harley—they illumine the poor hut—she cast them fearfully round.

Where am I? who are you, sir? what a terrible dream am I awoke from, or is it real? where is?—but who are you sir?

I was at her feet, Butler, but could not speak a word.

How did I get here? said she, addressing the boy, is Mr. Arnold's house burnt?

Aye, down to the very ground, and you must have been burnt in it, an it had not been for I, and that gentleman.

She cast her lovely eyes down on me, they were swimming with tears, the black on my face prevented her knowing me.

I thank you, sir, I remember now too much—yes, (turning half from me) I thank you, sir, I am a very poor creature, not worth saving, my thanks are poor, but I have nothing else to offer—will you (to the lad) conduct me where I may find the unfortunate family?

What I felt at that moment is inexpressible, not knowing that my face was of the same sable hue with my hands, I concluded the coldness of her address was intended; she was going, she had actually reached the door, my arms were spread and I fell down on my face, I could not speak—she was alarmed.

Alas! sir, what is the matter? are you hurt? speech was now returned to me.

Ah! Agnes! cried I, cruel Agnes! stay and see me expire at your feet, to obtain that one privilege, I have long followed thy fleeting shade, leave me not now without pardoning the wretched Harley.

She instantly returned from the door, and extending her white hand, Harley, is it you? is it indeed you? and am I so happy as to owe my life to Harley? rise my friend, why do you talk of death? you who are so worthy to live, and be the happiest of men. Oh! Butler, what words were these, I hardly dared to breathe lest I should loose a particle she uttered, she acknowledged her Harley was dear to her.

I am going, said the angel, to my friends in France, where I must never see my generous deliverer; but I may pray for him, I may acknowledge without blushing, how mentally dear he is to me.

No Agnes, answered I, let me conduct thee back to the noble, the injured Moncrass; Madame St. Lawrens commands.

Ah! what is it you say, Harley, do you know that honored friend and St. Clare? oh! do they yet love their unfortunate Agnes? how know you it is their command I should return to General Moncrass? have they received my letters? are they acquainted with the reason of my quitting Belle-Vue? what have I not suffered since I took that step, but (putting both her hands before her face, and with a tone at once graceful and moving) who could bear? but say (as if flying from the recollection) have you seen Madame St. Lawrens?

I answered I had.

And St. Clare? but why did they not answer my letters? oh! you would not believe to what cruel indignities, what hardships their silence has exposed me.

I told her Madame St. Lawrens was not at her convent when they arrived, that when she returned from Abbeville—

From Abbeville do you say—oh! my God! what has happened there? St. Clare, my beloved St. Clare is then no more—oh! my heart suggested some dreadful reason for their not writing. Blessed virgin! (falling on her knees, and crossing her lovely arms on her breast, her streaming eyes lifted up to heaven) if from thy holy bosom, my loved, my honored St. Clare, can look down on the miserable being she has left to deplore her loss, oh! may she know the pangs of duteous sorrow which now rend the heart of her Agnes; alas, dear saint! why was I not with thee? why did I not administer to thy last moments? Oh! Harley, your looks confirm my sad presages, she is dead, St. Clare the most tender friend, the maternal guide of my youth is no more.

I could not deceive her, and my silence was a mournful confirmation of the fatal event; yet I besought her to be comforted, Madame St. Lawrens yet lives, and lives but in her Agnes.

Oh! let us fly to her, my dear, my honored lady Abbess; what have not been your sufferings in this dreadful seperation; but you are following St. Clare, a saint on earth can have no doubts but she shall rejoin that angel in her state of purification, let us go, sir, let me throw myself with all my faults at her feet, she will forgive, and pity the frailty of her Agnes.

It was with great difficulty I could persuade her to desist from her resolution of going to France; I urged Madame St. Lawrens's wish, the General's impatience to see her,

his indisposition, and the letters he had received from St. Clare wrote with her dying hand, which required her immediate presence at Belle-Vue.

The last plea affected her, she would go, she would never disobey the injunctions of her beatified friend.

By this time the boy was fast asleep; he neither understood our conversation, nor did our agitation excite his curiosity; I roused him, and, Agnes chusing, if, as she said she was to go to Belle-Vue, to set out without any present explanation with the Arnold's; sent him to get a post-chaise, he returned in five minutes, I, prouder of my burden than of a monarch's diadem, lifted her into the chaise, and followed myself: we drove to the first stage beyond London, when I prevailed on her to take some rest, while I made some purchases in the town, such as a cloak, and some linen I thought she would want.

I told the woman at the shop the accident of the fire; and the escape of my angel, that she had a long journey to go, and left it to her to procure what necessaries might be immediately wanted; she acquitted herself so well that I had the bliss to see my Agnes appear dressed in her new habiliment, and smiling her approbation at the pains her happy Edward had taken.

I did not you may be sure hurry the drivers, never was such a journey—I opened my full and honest heart to the charmer of my soul; but, oh! Butler! how shall I do justice to the modest delicacy of her manner, when she owned all the affections of her heart were your Edwards,

My heart, said she (the crimson glow of modesty mantling in her cheek) is all I can call my own; *that* it is no merit in me to give you, for the truant had left *me*, it had abjured *my* power, long before I was sensible of its loss, but in making this confession, I do not engage my person, *that* must not be disposed of but with the approbation of Madame St. Lawrens; yet one thing I *will* promise my Harley, he shall never have any competitor in the heart of Agnes, but her God.

Think—no, you cannot, it is not in language to express, in heart to conceive my transports during the three days we were on the road.

When we arrived at Belle-Vue, Madame de Vallmont was walking on the lawn; she saw Agnes, and too happy for caution, ran back into the house, and informed the General of our arrival; then without waiting to know the effect of her precipitancy, returned as quickly to welcome Miss de Courci back; who was immediately summoned to the General's apartment.

My agitation during the painful suspense which her stay occasioned, is not to be described; I waited alone near an hour; no door opened, nor being was heard to move; all was still, and hush as silence itself; at length a storm succeeded the calm, Miss de Courci was in fits, the General relapsed, and the house in confusion.

Madame de Vallmont came to me, and apologised for leaving me so long; the General, said she, is too much affected to see you, Miss de Courci is very ill, and as for me, my heart feels too much for these amiable persons; you must leave us now, you will soon hear from us.

I begged she would charge herself with my respectful compliments, and with a heavy heart returned to the Hermitage.

This morning an invitation to dinner was brought by a servant, who told me, he had the honor to be appointed to wait on his master's niece.

His niece, answered I, I never heard he had one.

O your honor knows her well enough, Miss de Courci is his niece.

The invitation was from the General, and concluded with a desire, if Mr. Harley had recovered the fatigue of his journey, to see him early.

I immediately obeyed the welcome mandate, and was admitted to the General as soon as I was announced.

Never, my dear Butler, was a man so altered, the traces of sorrow and sickness were too visible on his fine countenance, but a gleam of pleasing satisfaction predominated. Dear Harley, said the worthy man, making an ineffectual effort to rise, what obligations have you conferred on me, on my amiable girl; how can I reward the service I have received from you?

Oh! Butler! Madame St. Lawrens had said, my Agnes was heiress to immense wealth—that was a circumstance I had not once thought of during our journey; to love, to be beloved by her, was a source of such boundless joy, I could admit of no other thought; but it now rushed on my memory, and the General's acknowledgment contributed to oppress me.

How easy, thought I, would it be to reward me, if indeed he values so highly the life I preserved, by bestowing on me the only blessing after which my heart aspires; but then the fatal, the to me undesirable acquisition of wealth, recurred to my idea; how should I dare from my humble station, with my moderate fortune, to look up to the paragon of the earth; who besides the beauty of her charming person, and the goodness of an angel, had also the endowments of wealth, to render her an object of universal adoration? I turned pale, my voice faltered—I dared not meet the General's eye, but my fears were quickly dispersed.

Sit down, my worthy young friend, continued the truly noble minded General, it was the axiom of a wise writer, that "there cannot be a more unhappy man in the world, than him who has never experienced adversity." I am not that unhappy man; but my sorrows did not proceed merely from a sudden reverse of fortune, my whole life hitherto, (a short interval only excepted) has been one continued series of misfortune; I yet remember when at your age I first saw and loved Lady Mary Ruthven; I then experienced the bitterness of hopeless love, the mortification of degraded fortunes, and the anguish of

despair, neither the calamities of my family, nor the successive disappointment of my hopes, were to be compared to what I then suffered.

Yet to me,

“Sweet have been the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad ugly and venomous
Wears yet a jewel in his head.”

I have been a strict observer of your disposition, and I speak it to your credit; the more narrowly I have attended to the movements of your mind, the better I have been pleased; I early saw your attachment to Agnes, I knew your fortune was moderate, but the many years of experience I have had, the various vicissitudes of fortune I have seen, have at least taught me one useful lesson; it has shewn me, the only intrinsically valuable work of the creation, is the *human heart*; yours, Mr. Harley, is above price, and Agnes only can equal you in *modest merit*, in *virtue*, and in *truth*.

Perhaps I shall incur the world's censure for thus disposing of my niece, perhaps I might flatter myself, that her beauty, and fortune, would if seen, and known, restore the house of Moncrass to its pristine honors, but ambition has no charms for her, and far from me be the wish to inspire her with so turbulent a passion.

You are acquainted with the history of my family; a beloved twin sister and myself were the only remains of an antient and honorable house: heirs to the misfortune entailed on an unhappy race, we were born to be buffeted with the billows of adversity: my poor bark was safely laid up in port; patience, and fortitude, had enabled me to support myself, 'till my gracious maker, by his own unerring wisdom, conducted me with peace and honor to the arms of the woman I adored. But my sister became a victim to deceit, and treachery; she sunk under the accumulated woes inflicted on her by a barbarous violater of female honor; yet she had no fault, no crime, after the breach of her holy vows to expiate; that indeed was of such an atrocious nature, no wonder the justice of an offended God pursued her, and made the object of her sinful apostacy, the source of her misery, she is now no more, Agnes is her only child.

He stopt a moment and turned his head away.

As soon as the benevolence of our sovereign was generally known, my unhappy sister obtained (what she had long sought for in vain) some tidings of her brother; she was a lay member of the convent where she breathed her last, and therefore her absence was dispensed with, while she brought her child to me, briefly told her sad story, and claimed my protection, for the offspring of her ill-placed love.

There were circumstances attending her history I could not immediately reveal, my beloved wife conceived herself injured, she considered my attachment to Agnes as criminal, nothing would render her easy, but discoveries I was bound not to make, we parted; but it was not so easy to eradicate the tenderness so many years had impressed on my heart; my love for her, and my life were bound in the same chain; my health has been

declining, had I died she would have seen her Moncrass was unfortunate, but not guilty. I have now hope our reunion will not be deferred, 'till I am no longer capable of assisting the dear woman to reconcile her violent resentment against me to her own heart.

Reuben is gone to London, with my consent to take his Julia's offered hand; it will hurt Lady Mary at first, but in the end she will know it is an act of kindness. You have in the mean while, *my* leave to pay your court to Agnes, win her my boy, and wear her.

Butler, Caroline—do you think I did not kneel, ah! conceive the happiness of your

HARLEY.

LETTER LVII.

General Moncrass to Major Melrose.

Belle-Vue.

WITH Ned Harley on the right, and Agnes on the left of my gouty chair, I call for your congratulations my dear Major. Hope once more returns to the habitation she had deserted, and I now look forward to lengthened days and a tranquil old-age. I commission you to promise every thing to my dear Mary—as to the Earl's narrow surmise, respecting my design to aggrandize my son, at the expence of Miss Neville, a short time will convince him how little I deserve such an illiberal censure; and the reflection will rebound from *me* to *him*. The moment I hear from Reuben that Julia and him are one, I will inclose to you the long, sad history of Agnes Moncrass, a history that will involve both Lady Mary, and her daughter in difficulties she does not foresee; she refuses to believe my consanguinity to Agnes, 'till the marriage hath actually taken place—ungenerous Mary! shall I owe nothing to your confidence? well, be it so—mine will be the *triumph*.

Now the mysteries *are* in a train for exposition, you will not deny us your company; you will surely grace the nuptials of your young favorite, and you will see in my charming niece, the same blooming creature you lamented so much at Lisbon.

The punishment of the French scoundrel is an object beneath our attention, but it is certainly right to reward the Arnold's; yet that I think may be deferred 'till the return of the happy pairs (as I trust they will be) to London. Agnes says, she shall like to see Julia make her own explanation at Greenwich.

Be so good as to hasten Dighten, I would have the two sets exactly alike, and if there are finer in the possession of any private lady in the kingdom, I shall not forgive him.

* * * * *

Reuben and his bride are this moment arrived—I inclose the packet for Lady Mary, which you will deliver to her immediately.

MONCRASS.

LETTER LVIII.

Major Melrose to General Moncrass.

London.

My dear General,

MY chaise was at the door, and a whole cargo of trunks chained on containing new finery, to deck out the old beau, at the approaching wedding, when I received your pacquet.

As I expected so soon to see you, I did not in my last inform you, that the Earl of Ruthven had been attacked with a second paralytic stroke; and that Lady Mary had again attended him to Bath.

I have waited on Mrs. Dowager Butler, she told me, she had heard from you, and that she should follow Lady Mary to Bath in two days; I consulted her on the necessity of my being the personal olive bearer, and we both agreed, that after the extreme violence of her resentment, the conviction of your faith, and her own error, would come more acceptably to Lady Mary unwitnessed; shall I confess, General? I was rejoiced the dowager's opinion tallied with mine on this occasion.

To confess truth, I felt myself far more inclined to join the contented party at Belle-Vue, than to do penance in the company of the worst half of the old peer. All Lord Ruthven's pleasantry and good-humour lay on the side which is now dead, nothing remains but dotage on his daughter, and an undiminished, nay faith, I think it is an increased regard for the dignity of his rank—*our family—our house—and our name*, is the cuckoo song he is never weary of singing; and you know, General, it will be natural for Lady Mary to be happy, when she receives your letter; and it will be just in her to be penitent, for the injury she has done you; both which from what I know of her ladyship, I think she will chuse to be in solo: in that case, as I said before, I must have waited to escorte her to Belle-Vue; and in the interval, for no lady can set out on a journey, without giving half a thousand directions about filling the imperial, should have been consigned to old honor, and dignity, instead of which, I shall be a man of consequence at Belle-Vue.

For these wise reasons, all approved by the old dowager who is Lady Mary's double; *mind that*, General; I have sent Alton express to Bath, with your dispatches; and shall set out to-morrow, on my way to Belle-Vue.

My boy, my dear runaway boy invites me, and let me tell you, I am in my own estimation of importance enough to be consulted on the marriage settlement.

When I adored your divine sister, how little did I foresee a child of her race, would inherit my fortune, but so it shall be—and notwithstanding your family pride, General, he must be a Melrose, let Reuben support your name, and Harley mine.

That little madcap Julia, cost me this morning a thousand pounds; she will have the vanity to say, her eyes wanted no brilliants to set them off—as to Mrs. Harley, she and I shall settle our accounts privately.

An old fellow! no such matter—I am this day but one and thirty; and shall be six years younger when I see my boys happiness compleat.

Have you any very young, very handsome, and very witty damsels in your part of the world, to whom I may in an *honorable* way, toss my handkerchief? I shall be lost, if you have nobody I can make love to.

Madame Vallmont is too old, and Mrs. Butler still older, what as Lord Ogleby says, “can I possibly do with these women?” who are neither young nor foolish.

Tell Julia, she must romp with me, and tell that angelic creature, Agnes, I will not bate her an ace of her mother’s beauty—let me see, she had blue eyes, Agnes, it seems has black; well, as we can’t have blue, why black must do; but her long dark eye lashes, her full but arched brow, her forehead of ivory, her coral lips which always a little divided shewed the pearl, she called teeth, the dimple on her left cheek, and the two brown moles near her under lip, the flowing hair, neck, shape, and arms, of Agnes Moncrass, I shall look for in her daughter, besides

“Song, beauty, youth, harmony,
For these were all hers.”

I shall love the gipsey I know I shall, better than any human being, if she is like her mother.

Certainly, counsellor, if you trust her, though upon my soul, ’tis no small risk.

I was in terrible distress, for a beautiful lass to make love to, when just in the God speed, who should come in, but Butler, and his pretty wife. He is obliged to attend the circuit, and she, impatient to be at Belle-Vue: I told her, I was as mad, as a simple, rattle brained *old fellow could* be, and advised her not to put herself under my protection.

Indeed, Major, she shall.

Well said, Butler, keep to the *she shall*, and thou art in luck.

I breakfast with them to-morrow, and then, hey presto, and away to Belle-Vue.

MELROSE.

The PACQUET.

LETTER LIX.

General Moncrass to Lady Mary Moncrass.

Belle-Vue.

IT is now, my dear Mary, ten months, since the fatal separation took place that deprived the fondest husband the sincerest friend, of all that was dear to him in woman; a period of time more painfully tedious to your Moncrass, than even the equal number of years which divided me from my first, last and only love; when dwelling among savages, my soul inclined to beings more congenial with itself, and when in the whole christian world, which in comparison with the Ethiop, was all that was desirable; my Mary Ruthven still dwelt on my imagination, loveliest, among the lovely.

Yet dear wife of my fond affection, I blame not you, and believe existence would now be a burthen to me, were I not sure that you would acquit me of every thought of inconstancy to the woman on whom I doat; and of every intention to offend your noble father, or injure my lovely Julia.—Alas! my dearest life! the vices that doom that dear child to bear the mark of heritable shame, does not originate with Moncrass. No, Lord Ruthven! the misfortunes of your family take their date from your tearing more than his life from him, her on whom 'till death he will doat.

I have wrote to Mrs. Butler to entreat she will be with you when this packet arrives, and I beg my loved wife will recollect that the man whose villany has so deplorably injured her is at his *grand account*: that Moncrass her real husband yet lives to adore her, to protect her child, and drop to the veil of oblivion over every painful remembrance; and if the love she once bore him, is not totally eradicated, that thought will carry her with fortitude through the sad story of Agnes, *once Moncrass*, and tremble not Mary, dear creature remember, that though I allowed, in the excess of passion, under the dominion of the baneful influence of jealousy, for all the weakness of a fond woman; yet in a cause where justice, and humanity are blended; I expect you will resume your former perfect self, and soar above the narrow prejudices of weaker minds: in a word, that you will again be the daughter of the house of Ruthven, the wife of Moncrass.

This Agnes Moncrass then whom at my departure from the Brazils, I left a professed nun, and whom you have often seen me lament as lost, not only to me but to God—was the woman whose visit to me in England, was the occasion of so many bitter hours to us both—the young creature for whom my Mary believed I abandoned *her*—her daughter, and both parent and child had a legal right to the name of—but my trembling hand cannot write the hateful characters, which robs my wife of her matronly right, and stigmatizes her only child; indeed my love I cannot—must after once more entreating you to be yourself, refer you to my poor sister's last packet.

MONCRASS.

LETTER LX.

St. Clare to General Moncrass.

Inclosed in the preceding.

Abbeville.

THE awful moment is approaching, it is already in view; when your sister will appear, with all her sins on her head, before the omnipotent creator of the world; when her immortal soul, no longer incumbered with this frail, this slow consuming body, will mount to the blessed throne, where mercy is united with justice; where the sad secret which has long rankled in her perturbed bosom will be laid bare, and where the irrevocable sentence of happiness, or misery, will be pronounced on the deathless part of your Agnes.

This therefore, brother, is the solemn period your unhappy sister fixes on, to pen her sad tale; even now, when the last important change, which proves in one silent moment, more than ages of eloquence, and philosophy, the futility, the nothingness of all human attainments, is already at hand; when you, my loved Reuben, and one more link of the heavy chain which once dragged my soul from heaven, are only in existence.

The all-seeing eye, my brother is *now* on me, it pierces the dark cell of unabsolved penitence; at the time you will read this letter, I shall behold my maker face to face; I pray I may be in mercy spared, that my painful existence may be lengthened, 'till I have retraced the dreadful story of my woes, and of my offences; that so my fate, may afford a warning to atone in some degree, for the sinfulness of an example, which has dishonored my family, my friends, and my religion.

Unprejudiced by passion, unbiassed by interest, under the immediate eye of God, and in momentary expectation of the last summons to his judgment, ah! my brother! need I other vouchers for my veracity?

When warm in youthful ardour, glowing with courage, and shining in wisdom; far above his years; I parted with the most amiable of brothers; he left me, happiest among the happy, and innocent, yet why need I say that, is it in nature for the *guilty* to be *happy*?

Victoire St. Lawrens was a novice in the convent where I was professed; and so entire was our friendship, she implored her father the Marquis to suffer her to take her vows at Lisbon, although his recal to France was hourly expected; but even filial love gave place to the union of friendship and religion; she, but ah! brother! need I speak of her virtue, her piety, or her benevolence; have they not increased with her years, and are they not at this moment, bright presages of eternal glory?

Beloved St. Lawrens—thou constant friend to the unfortunate Agnes—thy tears e'er thou wilt see this last address from a dying penitent, will have bedewed the urn of

her, who ever loved the virtue she could not emulate; from the grave, Victoire, I call on thee; thy sacred word, the unimpeached pledge of truth, will confirm the story of my disastrous fate; for hast thou not been to me, the firm rock on which my soul rested?

At the moment when the misfortunes of our family, severed from me my uncle, and my brother, my tears flowed into the bosom of Victoire, there I found consolation; she was equally the ministring angel of comfort, and of hope; my grief at parting with the dear, and only relations heaven had spared me; was softened by her wisdom and tenderness.

I was young and inexperienced in the ways of the great world, the little one epitomized within the walls of our convent, shewed, it is true, the same instances of selfishness, and narrow minds which dishonor the God to whom they were devoted.

But how inadequate were those, to the number of the daughters of sanctity, and meekness; and Victoire was herself an host to the credit of religion—the bright rays of her unspotted purity shone on me, I shared in the encomiums bestowed on her; our friendship was as perfect as our nature's were uncorrupt; we were uncontaminated by bad example, and alike free from the turbulent passion of pride, or the more degrading one of envy, and our cheerfulness was not tainted by unrepented sin.

In this sweet intercourse of friendship, and the religious exercises of our convent; ah! what a blessed retrospect, it was then only your sister knew real peace.

The confidence which the Marchioness St. Lawrens placed in her Victoire was unlimited; that amiable woman had formed the mind of her daughter after her own model, and knew the strength of her principles.

She furnished her apartment with books, selected carefully for the embellishment of her mind, without inspiring a desire of mixing in society; I partook with Victoire of the pleasure this maternal indulgence afforded.

At our devotions, one soul seemed to animate us, and our superior, who was not remarkably lavish of her commendations, would often say, such pure offerings to God reflected honor on her sisterhood.

Thus my brother, from seventeen to nineteen, blamelessly lived your Agnes; at that period—

Oh God! have the deluge of tears I have shed, the blood which has dropped from my heart, the sorrow, the distraction which has rent my soul; God of mercy! has it not all expiated? oh! before I go hence and am no more shall I not know it has?

An English lady was placed by her brother as a boarder at our convent, Miss Mountague was handsome, lively and fascinating; she had a wildness in her manner which appeared to be tempered with innocence, and sweetness of disposition. She

distinguished Victoire and her friend, and we were equally pleased with her; we were soon made the confidants of her situation.

Mr. Mountague and herself were nearly related to the English consul to whom they were visitors, when he discovered that a favoured lover had followed his sister to Lisbon, whom neither he nor the consul approved; she was therefore sent to the convent, to be kept if possible, from having any connection with the person they disliked.

This procedure exceedingly exasperated Miss Mountague, who represented her lover, in all the glowing colours of a first and fond attachment; he was a man she protested of innate worth, and unimpeach'd honor; that her brother's dislike to him arose from mere family pique, that he *assumed* a right he had *not* of fettering her inclinations, and that in fine, as soon as she was at age, she would certainly give her hand, and fortune, to him who was already in possession of her heart.

Young women, even after they have abjured the world themselves, feel an aptitude to become interested partizans in every tale of love committed to their confidence.

Victoire, and I were anxious for the fate of the persecuted Miss Mountague, and her charming lover, and notwithstanding the vigilance of the lady Abbess, who as Miss Mountague was a catholic had hopes, which were probably encouraged by her brother, of prevailing on her to take the veil, he found means to write to her, letters, and billets, which we read with eager curiosity; they were pen'd with all the ardour of juvenile attachment, happily blended with a fine understanding; and proved the talents of the writer to have been cultivated with no small pains.

Victoire, whose happy temperament of mind accorded with the vows she was destined to take, considered those letters as glowing pictures of the human mind; whose fervor, being directed to the creature instead of the creator, was disturbed by its own violence.

She acknowledged the elegant style of the writer, but *her* general comment was—what pity such fine talents were not employed in the service of the holy church; if he were a priest, could we send him on a mission, what heart so obdurate but must be conquered by his eloquence; what ignorance so stubborn, but must be subdued by the vivacity of his ideas; ah! Mountague, she would add, you owe this man to God.

My mind, fated to error, was more warm in its approbation, on less laudable motives; I had hitherto no conception of other sentiments, than what the devotions we regularly paid our Maker, my friendship for Victoire, and the fraternal love for an absent brother inspired; but Miss Mountague's correspondence, her passionate expressions, and her animated description of her own feelings, though all strictly delicate, discovered a new, and altogether pleasing union of soul, from which *my* vow excluded *me*.

That vow, and all its concomitants, once so desirable became less, and less pleasing; the world, as the fair seducer painted it; was too great a sacrifice to be given up, without some experience, and great deliberation.

The misfortunes of my family, recurred with aggravated sorrow to my memory; it had not only deprived me of parents, fortune, and family honors; but it had also cut me off from all the social blessings of existence, and immured me in the prime of my days, in the austere gloom of a convent, when the delight I took in the dangerous conversation of the English boarder, convinced me, that my fate and inclinations were far from being united. But as the wanderings of the heart were ever attended with a conviction that it was now too late to recal my vow, or change my situation; the new impression which arose from the imbecility and inexperience of a young mind, wore insensibly away.

The correspondence of the lovers was at length discovered, and for some time Miss Mountague was a prey to the most anxious suspense.

One day she was told a lady from the consul waited to speak to her at the grate: what new expedient? cried she, as she sullenly obeyed the summons—she staid a long while; and at her return, her countenance flushed, and animated, anticipated the confidence she was disposed to place in us—she owned she had heard from her lover, whose passion enabled him to surmount every obstacle; the same lady, she said, promised to visit the convent next day, and would be accompanied by a Scotch friend, extremely desirous of paying her respects to me.

It is not mere fancy, my dear brother, which through life impresses the mind with an affectionate, a sympathetic regard for our native country: No, it is a combination of the most pleasing ideas, which calls the memory back through the subtle maze of passing events, to the place from whence we derive our existence; and there fixes it, with a partial and melting sensibility, on scenes of juvenile pleasure; the endearing fascination unites person to place; and thus, while we remember the regretted and never to be recalled scenes of our youth, when borne by destiny to a different part of the globe; the involuntary joy we feel on meeting those, whose first breath were drawn with ours, is an oblation every congenial mind will offer to its native country.

Scotland was a paradise to which I must never return, but it was nevertheless the Eden of my imagination.

Our noble castle, graced with an owner whose open heart, and giving hand, rendered it the asylum of distress; and the dignity, the virtue of our parents, yet lived in my memory.

What were the luxuriant vineyards, the fertile earth, which from its heated bowels sent forth the choicest fruits, and most esteemed viands? what in comparison were they to the serene highland brow, where once our lofty turrets overlooked the large domain, and numerous vassalage, of the house of Moncrass? to the white flocks which fed in peaceful luxury on the mountain tops, the cattle which graced the valley sides, the native sound of our old minstrels bagpipe, and the rude dance in our large hall, where at sun-set, the

young men and maidens met to solace in honest mirth, after the labours of the day? a thankful sacrifice no less acceptable to the prince of peace, than holy prayers, from the deep monastic cell.

Ah! Moncrass! even now, while the dim glimmering of the consuming taper, remind me how fast the long night approaches; *even now*, when in humble hope of the eternal day, which I trust will break on my soul, still to thee dear native Scotland do I turn; and as my first breath, so will my last be thine.

Forgive me, brother, I wander, alas! no wonder; my senses sink at the recollection.

Oh! Scotland! dear country! that saw my noble father! the father also of his clan! the friend of mankind! him, and his manly sons, fit forms for heroes! and fit minds for saints! with all their faithful followers laid low: my mother too, my graceful matronly elegant mother! with her young Duncan, her last born, blooming cherub, brother! brother! *we* were absent, *we* can only conceive, the agonies of her soul, when abandoning herself to despair, she fled from her castle:—ah! could not her birth, her innate dignity? could not the innocence of the blue-eyed Duncan save them?

Oh! Scotland! Scotland! how hast thou encroached on the few hours of life, left the miserable daughter of a ruined family—thy name was a passport to my unalienable heart; *that* Miss Mountague well knew.

Ah! said I, Victoire, this stranger; perhaps she was known to my father, my mother, my brothers, fallen is the boast of Scotland, alas! *they* are no more.

Eagerly did I wait her arrival.

Miss Mountague was unusually solicitous about the decoration of her person; and when I saw her charmingly attired for the interview, I for the first time regretted, that my order would not suffer me to add the same ornamental additions to my person, which I simply fancied were all that were wanting, to render me equally lovely with her.

The important bell at length rang, the visitors were announced.

I ran to apprise Victoire, to my extreme vexation the Marchioness was in the garden with her, I was therefore obliged to accompany the English boarder alone; I regretted the absence of my friend, as if from a presage of the events which were to take their date, from this fatal visit; and expressed a repugnance at going to the grate, without her, which Miss Mountague found it no easy matter, to subdue; at length, partly prevailed on by her entreaties, and partly laughed out of the childish subjection, as she gaily termed my attachment to Victoire, I accompanied her to the grate.

Two tall elegant figures were waiting, they accosted us very politely in the English tongue; Miss Mountague presented me as Lady Agnes Moncrass, her friends were full of acknowledgments for the honor I conferred on them, *one of them*, her I thought my

countrywoman, *particularly*. The wild girl, insisted on removing my veil, merely to satisfy them, I had the cast of my family, and was not an ugly Portuguese.

There was a sprightly kind of resolution in this young woman, which was seldom overcome; yet her perseverance had nothing disgusting in it, with Victoire and me, she always carried any point she chose; she detested the holy order, among whom her brother had placed her; nuns, not individually, but as a body, were her aversion; and notwithstanding all our asseveration, that the habit was our choice, she gave Victoire and myself, the appellation of beautiful martyrs.

Well, brother! you conceive the source of my ruin; you behold me in violation of our rules, unveiled; nothing of flattery was omitted to reconcile me to myself on the occasion, and the gratitude of the two strangers for such an unusual favor, was unbounded.

Ah! said the one, who had not before visited Miss Mountague, is it possible so young, so enchantingly lovely, you can resolve to bury such beauty, such elegance in a cloyster? yet, added the insinuator, that resolution, though injurious to yourself, may, in the general be of advantage to society; since wherever you are seen, the impressions made by that face, will be indelible.

The tender tone in which this speech was delivered, and the sigh which followed it, rather surprised, but did not alarm me.

Miss Mountague presently removed to the farther end of the grate, and the conversation she was holding was sinking into a low whisper, which she appeared not to wish should be interrupted; and as I could readily conjecture the subject on which she was so wholly engrossed, I could not but enter on some kind of chat with the other visitor; yet when she praised the beauty of my person, and regretted my vow, I thanked her, but had the prudence to change the subject.

We insensibly spoke of music, *that* she found was the next enchanting thing about me, I was indeed a *Moncrass*, my mother was allowed to be a perfect harmonist, my tears started, so you know brother she was.

My part in the anthem we chaunted at mass the Sunday before, was I found familiar to this person, who remarked on my beautiful tenor notes, and declared, that while *my* voice was distinguished, the church was the heaven of heavens.

A message from the Marchioness St. Lawrens, called me unwillingly from the grate, which I left, I confessed with reluctance; Miss Mountague was quite out of humour, and I observed, a saddening cloud gathering in the eyes of my new friend, which communicated to my own.

I attended the Marchioness, but was restless, absent, and inattentive; I fancied myself indisposed; even the company of my beloved Victoire, grew irksome, I retired on

pretence of a violent head-ach to my cell: even there, the voice, look, and engaging manner of the stranger pursued me.

The sensations, excited by the too pleasing recollection, of all that had passed during my stay at the grate, were altogether new, and delightful; there needed not the attraction of country to tempt me, to a second meeting with the charming stranger; I even desired it, most ardently desired it; and was unreasonably displeased with Miss Mountague, at our next interview, because she gave no hint that her friends wished to repeat their visit.

The next day high mass was performed, for the soul of one of the heads of a neighbouring convent; ah! thought I, if my friend received such pleasure from the sound of my voice, shall I not gratify so obliging a creature, by my best exertions? doubtless, if I was tolerable *before*, I shall be more so *now*.

If ever my voice merited the encomiums bestowed on it—it was then; the whole choir complimented me, do you not shudder at my wickedness? yes, my soul was raised to a rapturous pitch of harmony; the sisters revered the fervency of my devotion, and the bishop who performed the service, told our superior, that my voice inspired devotion in the most careless; it is said the good prelate truly seraphic; and I observed that in the body of the church, the voice of Agnes, wrought more on my flock than my sermon: blushes crimsoned my guilty cheeks, at the commendations, which had the real source of my zeal been known, would have been changed to reproof; I congratulated myself it was not; ah! brother, in that hour of sin, I forgot the all-searching eye of heaven is everywhere.

Victoire questioned me respecting the strangers, I told her they were agreeable, but forbore to add, that they were enchanting.

The next day, Miss Mountague asked me to walk in the garden, Victoire as usual accompanied us; I read in the eyes of the English boarder, her vexation, and ungratefully participated her sentiments.

I had no doubt of the sincerity of Victoire's attachment to me, nor did I ever put *her* friendship in competition with that of the English boarder; neither had I yet felt the reproaches of my own conscience: but I was blind to the danger, and sensible only to the pleasure of seeing, and conversing, with an amiable person, whose attention I did not wish to share, even with Victoire; there was however no avoiding her company, she hung in her usual familiar manner on my arm, estimating the integrity of *my* heart, exactly by her *own*; and conscious of no concealments herself, suspected none in me; we continued together 'till the bell rang, and as we returned without separating, our boarder had no opportunity of speaking to me alone, as I saw Victoire was a restraint on her.

Just after vespers, Miss Mountague was summoned to the grate, and to my extreme mortification received her friends alone.

My chagrin at this trifling incident, is inconceivable; I had begun a work basket, which I meant to present to my agreeable countrywoman—but my senses were so entirely

deranged by this illusory slight, that unknowing what I did, I was beginning to take it to pieces.

Victoire snatched it from me, what are you thinking of Agnes? said she, in amazement you have begun the prettiest piece of work in the world, and are going to destroy it, before it is finished; why would you remove the flowers?

I had again recourse to my head-ach and walked into the garden, leaving her to arrange the ornament on the basket.

The moment I was alone, I burst into tears, and in that situation was overtaken by Miss Mountague; fancying myself slighted by her, I endeavoured to conceal my vexation.

You are always, said she, so cemented to the side of Victoire, there is no speaking to you, poor Mrs. Douglas, added she, in a fretful tone, was really grieved at not seeing you; there is no expressing the friendship she has conceived for you, read, extending towards me a rich pocket-book, how tenderly she laments your absence.

I have before said, my dear brother, I had not the remotest suspicion of any intrigue, or intended imposition in those people, yet I involuntarily started back.

Nay, said she, putting the book coldly in her pocket, if it be so, if you will not suffer any one to love you but sister Victoire, I shall inform Mrs. Douglas.

Cruel, I answered, I esteem Mrs. Douglas, I had almost said, above all women; but that would be an injury to Victoire.

To say nothing of me, interrupted she, archly.

Well, said I, I am too ingenuous to talk to you, but Mrs. Douglas is the most pleasing person I have seen; and to own the truth, I was not pleased you did not invite me to the grate to day when I knew she was there.

How could I, said she, eagerly, without Victoire?

I started, I had, it is true, some fears that Victoire would so far eclipse my poor charms, both of person, and mind, as to attract the regard, I desired to engross to myself—but I did not comprehend how the same motive should operate on Miss Mountague, and I had yet generosity enough to be offended, at the implied indignity, offered my friend.

It is paying no compliment to the penetration of your friends, Miss Mountague, replied I, gravely, to suppose they would not be pleased with so engaging a creature as Victoire; if Mrs. Douglas is really as good, and sensible as she appears, it is only necessary Victoire should be presented to her; love, and esteem will certainly follow—but how is it, my dear, *you* have taken a dislike to a woman, who is a pattern of piety, politeness, and good-humour?

Me! cried Miss Mountague, I protest I have taken no dislike to her; I only think her a great deal too good, to be entrusted with *all* my mad secrets: but come, Agnes, we talk *at* rather than *to* each other; will you read what poor Douglas has written in the pocket-book? or shall I seal it up, and invite Victoire to our next conference?

Doomed to inevitable destruction, I not only opened the pocket-book, but by consenting to accompany her to the grate without Victoire, I deprived myself of the benefit of her wise observations, and the guard *her prudence*, would have placed over *my folly*.

On opening the book, I found a few lines written, which I here copy for your perusal; you will see my dearest Moncrass, some of the arts made use of to destroy your sister, ah, me! how painful is recollection.

Written in the pocket-book.

There was a time charming lady Agnes, when I believed it impossible I could enter the walls of a convent with pleasure; but you my sweet unfortunate Scot are the unconscious magnet of my attraction; where you are is to Douglas an elysium; how my heart throbbed when the bell summoned our friend to the grate this morning; and how, ceasing to respire, I felt the disappointment, thou dear insensible, canst not conceive: will you not, once more, condescend to see the fondest, warmest of friends? shall I never more, except it be at her devotion hear the voice of my amiable countrywoman? *is* Lady Agnes Moncrass insensible? *can* she be ungrateful?

I will suppose you have read the billet; you see, brother, artful as was the style, had I not been so very innocent, it would have alarmed me.

The next day our visitors were announced; ah! madam, said Mrs. Douglas, is this real, or is it an illusion of my senses? do I again behold you? are my fond eyes once more blest with the sight of that heavenly face? then kissing her hand, she extended it with an air of frank invitation to the grate.

I was weak enough to return the compliment, and my fingers were pressed by a hand which shook so violently I was quite terrified; but what became of me when, on looking earnestly through the black gauze veil, which but half exposed the face of the pretended Mrs. Douglas, I saw her drop on her knees, and in a faltering trembling accent, declare the impossibility of longer imposing on me: charming Agnes continued the impostor, do not destroy me with thy frowns; behold at thy feet the most miserable of wretches; no woman, but a lover, a fond, despairing lover; one who knows not hope, who is lost to all the joys of life, but who, if thou art inexorable to his prayers, who, if thou wilt not pardon, alas! thou canst not reward, will shew thee he at least can die—die, Reuben! how glibly do the vain talkers speak of death.

I can give you no description of my fright, and consternation; I suppose I need not now say, the other was also a counterfeit lady.

Mr. Marshall the lover of Miss Mountague, fertile in contrivance had laid the scheme; and foreseeing that if his visits to the convent were often repeated, a nun would be appointed to attend them, he engaged his friend in order to entertain the expected spy, to accompany him; the discovery of their sex was premature, it was not intended to take place till after she left the convent.

Mr. Marshall swore he was undone—Miss Mountague declared she was ruined, Douglas was yet kneeling hardly presuming to look up, but still earnestly imploring compassion and forgiveness—while I stood aghast, viewing each by turns as they spoke, with visible marks of horror, and amazement; unable to form for some minutes any kind of judgment, of the meaning, or intention of either party.

Presently, however, that is to say, as soon as my scattered ideas began to be collected; the whole transaction, with the sense of my own imprudent conduct, rushed at once on my mind; and I felt such real compunction for *my* part in it, that overwhelmed with shame, and terror, I should certainly have fainted, had not Miss Mountague prudently dismissed the gentlemen, and led me to her room—this presence of mind prevented her secret from being discovered, for Victoire was just gone to my cell, and had I seen her, while I was so dreadfully agitated, I should most certainly have told her all: oh! would to God I had—what guilt and misery had I not then escaped.

Miss Mountague threw herself at my feet, she implored my pity; if Mr. Marshall's visits at the grate were now discovered, her brother would remove her to some more strict convent—and perhaps, for what would not resentment aided by money effect, shut her up for life; she should be miserable—deprived of the man she loved—what was life to her, but a prolongation of wretchedness?—answer, added she, Agnes to the God you serve, for the sin my desperation may plunge me into—on the contrary, if you kindly consent to keep my secret, one month—one little month—puts me in possession of my fortune, and renders me mistress of my actions; the consul is too well acquainted with the laws of our country, to lend his sanction to my confinement here, after that period—dear Agnes! you have my life in your hands—for pity's sake, then—

Thus persuaded, blandished, and threatened; I at last promised not to reveal what had happened—no, not to Victoire; on condition that the pretended Mrs. Douglas was not again admitted.

Oh! my brother—if there is a female whose honor, and whose peace is dear to you; preserve, carefully guard her from the unapprehended, and therefore more to be feared danger of corruption from her own sex; without the aid of vicious or inconsiderate woman, the arts of man would be essayed in vain; oh! that my experience had not rendered *me* thus wise; trace the origin of female ruin, to its first source, in all situations and degrees of life, and you will in general find it, in the art or folly of their own sex.

Had I stopped here, had I, though in the participation of the guilty secret, withdrawn myself from her further concerns, I might have saved my soul from actual sin; for let me confess with blushes, that even *now*, crimson o'er my pallid cheek, the impression made on my heart, by the imposter, was indelible as sudden; and considering his disguise, unaccountable; but to those, who knew the specious dissembler, it will not appear strange, that *he* whose fine person, and finer sense, had always been employed in the art of seduction, should win the heart of an *innocent* like your *poor sister*; his manners so delicate, so insinuating, his voice, oh! let me fly the recollection, left even *now*, my soul rebel against the mercy of my God—he was formed for my undoing, his looks,

tender, expressive, and respectful; stole into my heart, that heart where deceit, and disguise were equal strangers; for never till *his* fatal image took possession there, did it harbour one thought which ought to be concealed.

Miss Mountague, cheerfully complied with my condition; she was the next morning summoned to the grate, and I saw her return with swollen eyes, and dejected mein; she looked at me in mournful silence, as she passed me in the garden—but though I was alone did not speak.

Fool, that I was! I feared some terrible event, the constraint I imposed on myself, in not accompanying her to the grate, had cost me very dear, I was on the rack to know all that passed.

I had indeed resolved never to *see* the fictitious Mrs. Douglas more: *that* was a sacrifice the duties of religion, and the laws of prudence demanded; but did their severity extend to the prohibition of *hearing* of a person, who was in my fond opinion one of the first beings in the creation? it was my misfortune to have known the charming man, but was not that misfortune reciprocal? he had not injured me, and it was not possible knowing the religious order to which I belonged, he could harbour any intentions inimical, either to my peace, or the vow I had taken; why then, secure in my faith, and conscious of the rectitude of my heart; should I deprive myself of the pleasure it gave me, to speak of an amiable man, for whom I might preserve an holy friendship, without injury to honor, or religion?

These were the weak, the fallacious arguments that occurred to me, as I took the circle of our charming garden: fatal sophistry! oh! never let woman trust to the false reasoning of a heart, where passion has once entered; true reason has no residence with love; in the tumult of a fond attachment her voice is not heard, her influence is totally lost, and she is by degrees wholly expelled: yet ingenuous to deceive itself, how many plausible excuses will the mind not admit, and flattering its own weakness, miscall the ruinous folly by the name of reason. But reason, though she appears quietly to retire, and patiently to see her throne usurped—when fell destruction has ravaged the devoted victim, *returns in triumph*, and supported by conscience, strips the veil that obscured her enemies, and speaks in thunder to the sad despairing soul—oh! brother, *thus did I* deal with my better sense, and *thus am I* repaid.

I again met Miss Mountague, who again passed me in silence.

No longer able to conceal my anxiety, or repress my curiosity, when we met again, I hesitatingly accosted her; hoped no ill news occasioned, the sadness of her looks, and ashamed of my own folly, sought to hide the confusion in my countenance, by affecting to gather some flowers, while I asked, if her *friends* were well.

She answered not, but dropped a billet at my feet, and hastily quitted the parterre.

Unhappily, our superior was that instant coming down the walk, accompanied by Victoire, and her mother; the Marchioness, and her son's bride, Madame St. Lawrens, were come to visit my friend, and hearing I was in the garden, were seeking me.

What in this ill-fated moment could I do? the billet lay at my feet; conscience bid me avoid the temptation, wretch that I was! I rejected its admonition.

If I leave it, thought I, the lady Abbess will certainly see it; the contents perhaps will lead to explanations that may ruin poor Mountague, and raise suspicions of me, that would render my future life uneasy; they might even affect the innocent Victoire.

Our superior was a woman of high birth, and haughty spirit, austere in her manner, severe in her principles, and strict in her devotion: she was, nevertheless, extremely open to suspicion, she viewed the actions, and penetrated the designs of her first favorites, with a mistrustful, and cautious observance, and being in her own conduct, an example of rigid propriety, censured without mercy, every error she detected in her little community; she still drew nearer to the place where I yet stood, the guilty billet before me; in an evil moment I took it up, alas! to avoid a temporary mortification, I embraced eternal ruin.

BILLET.

How shall I support my trembling limbs from the convent, should not the object of my adoration deign to hear me? But let me not think it, what thou soft apprehensive charmer, canst thou fear? art thou not guarded, secure, beyond the reach of violence? art thou not inaccessible even to hope? oh! let thy religion, sweet devotee, teach thee mercy; my eternal welfare is in thy keeping; wilt thou not save an immortal soul? let me not depart unblest with thy sight, to look on thee, to hear thee, is all I can ask, or thou bestow; I kneel to thy compassion, once, once more, heavenly nun, once more bless thy Douglas.

You have read the incoherent scrawl. How Moncrass, now that I see the poor contrivance which undid me, dare I hope you will forgive me, for what followed?

The next day Miss Mountague grown bold by success, left a second billet in my cell, even at the foot of the crucifix; and on the succeeding one, a third, more extravagant than either.

I forbear to insult your good understanding, and solid judgment, with their contents; yet, such as they were, they completed my destruction: long did I dwell in rapture on every line, and implicitly believe the false vows they contained; but it is also long since they have arose in terrible array to punish, and to condemn me; years of penitence have not obliterated the sinful folly from my memory—No! it rises with agonising minuteness, and now fills *that* space with *terror* and *regret*, which *then* glowed with *transport*; I sicken at the recollection and tremble to think, by what progressive villany, that man became the object of my adoration.

Let me not dwell on the hateful particulars; you perceive my fate, I consented to another interview; one only was asked, but another, and another succeeded. What was there in tenderness, in eloquence, in art that was not essayed for my ruin? How often was the sacred Creator of the world, invoked to witness the blackest perjury? What tears were not shed? What anguish feigned? alas! alas! how could I, young, unhackneyed in deceit, and naturally open in my temper, how could I dread danger from vices, which I did not believe existed, among the venial sins, of a degenerate world? Like the innocent lamb, who meets the murderous knife with its offered throat, and fearless of the mortal stab, only bleats from the anguish of the death wound, I fondly believed all my destroyer's vows, shared his regret at my situation, and mourned in real agony the irrevocable vow I had taken; not merely because it was an eternal barrier betwixt me, and the man I adored; but because it inflicted misery on him.

We continued to meet at the grate without suspicion, Miss Mountague was a perfect Argus, but Victoire, was too wise, and too virtuous to be trusted with a secret on which my salvation was staked.

What have I done to you Agnes? she would say, how have I lost your friendship? you avoid me, yes, Agnes, you fly my society, you no longer accompany me to the altar of God, even the path to heaven becomes less desirable to Agnes because her Victoire would tread it with her, how am *I*, or how are *you* changed? my sister, my friend, it is not only Victoire you discard, what is become of that chearful serenity, which used to gild your tranquil days and gave the peace of righteousness to your nights? Oh! Agnes, you have expelled from your heart, friendship, and content; what are the guests you have admitted in their place? your new favorite, the English boarder, has perhaps been giving you sketches of the world, drawn by her lively pencil, and you regret you are not an inhabitant of the place she paints in such glowing colours; be not deceived, my friend, she is herself yet ignorant of the many storms she must encounter; *here* sister Agnes our task is easy, our existence delightful; we live to the glory of the king of kings—we are happy here, we shall be blessed hereafter: how extatic the heavenly enjoyments we are promised, on earth we are free from care, and we shall be received in heaven as the handmaids of our Redeemer; this Agnes is the reward of our pure, our inoffensive lives, return, dear sister, to Victoire—to God.

Alas! Victoire! what painful sensations did thy gentle pleadings create; how often did I throw myself on thy bosom, that faithful seat of holy love, how often has it been wet with my tears—but I was lost, past redemption lost; and instant death, for then the voice of conscience was not heard, would have been less terrible to me, than the deprivation of his sight, on whom my soul hung—and in whom I implicitly confided.

The account he gave of himself, which was also corroborated by Mr. Marshall, was; that he was a younger branch of the house of Douglas, that his father's attachment to the Stuarts had involved his family in the general calamity, which had exterminated mine; his income was a small pension, which however would, if shared with me, be luxury, oh! could he find means to take me from the hated convent.

You tremble, you feel a momentary horror at the apostacy of your sister, you are filled with terror for her lost soul: ah! brother! all was indeed lost; I was eagerly bent on my own destruction, the convent was become hateful to me, it was the sepulchre of my lover's hope; the holy sisterhood, what was their piety to me? were they adored by a Douglas, did they love *like me*, would they not, *like me* languish for freedom? *like me* detest the returning light which shone on my captivity? would they not pine in joyless bondage, and waste the sad hours in vain wishes to escape to the arms of so amiable a lover?

Miss Mountague judged rightly of the disposition of her friends; she was now within a few days of being at age; her brother, too much enraged hitherto to see her, now desired to talk to her in the presence of our superior: it should be, he engaged the last effort he would make to save her from marrying a professed libertine; he desired the two young nuns, her friends, might also be present; he hoped from their known good sense, he should in them find advocates to support his arguments.

Our superior, whose understanding was, at least, in high estimation with herself, was always gratified, when appealed to, in matters where her judgment was the ultimate decision; and though in the case of Miss Mountague, that was not premised, yet she flattered herself, she should either persuade the young lady, to yield to the remonstrances of her brother, or convince him, his opposition to his sister's inclination, was unreasonable; not a little pleased indeed was the good lady, at the compliment Captain Mountague paid her judgment.

Now, said my lover, if ever you escape this dreadful place, Agnes, it must be on the day this conference is held.

I believed it impossible, but added my wish to his, that it were not.

On my knees, Agnes, cried he, in the utmost agitation, let me prevail on you, to be guided by your Douglas; be confident, and nothing can prevent our success; Miss Mountague you well know, will not sacrifice her love for Marshall to her brother's whim; the consequence will be, his declining any further intercourse with her; she will then be released from her confinement, and received to the protection of her relation the consuls lady: when she is gone, think, Agnes, how shall we ever meet more, and can you forever give up the man, who lives but in you? for me, I swear by the Almighty God, the moment you are shut from my sight, shall be my last, *here* if you refuse to join your endeavours with mine, to escape from this worse than prison, my lifeless body shall greet your eyes—your cruel eyes—therefore weep not, but resolve—*now, this very now* is the crisis of our fate, you either give yourself to Douglas, you consent to fly with him, you live in the core of his heart, in the bosom of his love, or you sentence him to die, by his own despairing hand.

The trembling eagerness of him, who too well knew, how inestimable to me, was the life he threatened to end; the big drops of sweat which stood on his bent brow, his eyes raised to heaven, while he made the horrid vow of suicide, all combined to terrify,

and persuade; almost insensible with fear, I promised that nothing but death should prevent my following his instructions.

Our superior had an apartment within her parlour, she called her auditory; thither she usually summoned the old nuns on any public occasion, and there also she entertained our bishop, and made her own confessions; it was furnished with books, &c. in a superior style to the parlour, and she resolved to hear Captain Mountague's conference with his sister, and give her judgment thereon in this private apartment; there were two doors to it, one of which opened into our hall, the other into the outer parlour; my lover was acquainted with every particular, he had laid his plan with the utmost caution and deliberation.

Captain Mountague was a little fair man, so delicately formed, that he was called by the young englishmen, chicken Mountague.

As Miss Mountague's intention of quitting the convent was known, the restraint she was first under relaxed; all her letters and messages were delivered to her, and the consul's lady informed her, she had ordered some cloaths, which she intended to present to her, on the day of her coming of age.

On this pretence, a box was sent to the convent, by means of that lady's woman, in which among other things, was a parcel sealed, and addressed to me; containing a suit of Captain Mountague's scarlet cloaths, the colour he usually wore.

The evening before the conference, Douglas advised me to feign indisposition, the deceit was spared me, I was really very ill, my dear Victoire passed the night in my cell, ah! what a night—how did my heart reproach me for my duplicity to my true friend, she prayed for her Agnes, but even the prayers of that righteous woman were ineffective, I had deserted my God and he now abandoned *me*. But though dead to religion, gratitude, and friendship had not lost all influence, my Victoire yet remembers how often and how ardently I embraced her—how—almost speechless with agony I besought her to pray for—to pity the *lost* Agnes.

Her amazement at this expression is not to be conceived, how? lost? my sister! my friend! said she, ah! thou art very ill, thy senses are not right, compose thyself, thou art not lost—God will restore thee.

Never, never, cried I weeping, and at that moment I was on the point of confessing my hidden sin, when the bleeding corpse of Douglas appeared to my imagination, at the grate where he swore it should lay if my escape was prevented; I shrieked, Victoire was terrified, she embraced me, implored me to be comforted, to rely on the intercession of the virgin, she again prayed for me, and thus passed this horrible night.

At last, day approached, when the bells rung to early prayers; the nuns as they passed to chapel all enquired after my health.

Ah! said Victoire, weeping, pray for her, she is indeed much indisposed.

Let me relieve you, sister, said a friendly nun, I will watch with Agnes.

No, answered my friend, she seems now more composed, I will remain with her 'till day, if God sees fit to continue her sickness, you shall watch with her to night.

I now began to tremble, lest the officious zeal of the sisterhood, should prevent my going out of my cell; I therefore affected to be sleepy, and assuring Victoire that I felt myself much better, prevailed on her to leave me; her piety only induced her to comply with my entreaties, she would go, she said, to morning vespers, and pray for her Agnes; I embraced her, I could not restrain my tears, again and again I threw myself on her faithful bosom—softened and surprised, she left me with extreme reluctance—I entreated she would take some rest on her return from chapel, reminded her of the conference, and begged she would make my excuses for not attending; go best of women, said I, pulling my veil over my eyes, which were drowned in tears; the benediction of the saints, and angels follow thee, if I should rise before your return, I will wait for you in the garden.

As soon as she was gone, I wrapped my gown round me, and taking the bundle under my arm, passed the hall into the superior's auditory, which being opened to be aired, I easily found my way through, into the outer parlour, and there entered the light closet which bolted on the inside, and put on the man's apparel. The abbess and all the nuns were gone to vespers; and I waited with incredible patience and resolution, two hours in this place before the ringing of the gate bell announced the expected visitor.—I heard him pass the closet door, with what trepidation may be imagined, I heard the wheel turn, and the portress return to her station.

Miss Mountague had received particular instructions for her conduct; she knew my attachment to Douglas, and how passionately he wished me to be freed from my vows; but as the thing appeared to her totally impossible, and as she was of a very volatile disposition, it never entered her head that such a plan was intended to be carried into execution by her means, without acquainting her with it. But as high spirits are generally soonest affected, Mr. Douglas feared, were she to know the importance *to us* of every minute she passed in the auditory, her anxiety might defeat the very purpose, we were sure she would not fail to forward, all in her power.

Her instructions, which she punctually adhered to, were to commence the conversation in terms, that should enrage her brother; who was a very choleric young man; when it was supposed he would break up the conference in a rage; she was then to affect sudden humility, and by that means, pacify his anger, and recommence the subject of her attachment to her lover, with such mildness, as should give Mr. Mountague hopes of prevailing on her to accede to his will.

Every thing happened exactly as Douglas expected.

In the first emotions of anger, Mr. Mountague was leaving the auditory; the abbess rang her bell to give the portress notice to open the gate, the removal of the seats contributed to the deception, and in that instant I stepped out of the closet; the portress

was hastening with her back towards me to the gate, I found myself in the street deprived of every sense of recollection.

Mr. Douglas was waiting, he received me with transport; Captain, said he, taking me by the arm, you have been detained; then softly, if you love your Douglas, resume your presence of mind, it is too late to retract.

I looked round, the gate of the convent was closed, my very soul died within me.

Come on my love, remember it is your Douglas, that implores you—take courage—the rest of my plan is as well laid as this; we are both lost if we are retaken, if we get clear from hence my life shall be devoted to my Agnes.

His voice reanimated me, I knew the danger we were in, and used my utmost endeavours to keep pace with his wishes; we passed the streets with celerity, and happily without observation, we left the city, and reached the sea shore.

Here Agnes, said Douglas, supporting my tottering steps into a natural cavity in a rock, this must be our dwelling 'till our friend gives us the signal of safety and escape.

The precautions he had taken to prevent my suffering any inconvenience, or taking cold in this place by being exposed to the weather, was a proof of his affection; he had spread a quantity of mats on the floor, if the bottom of the rock, which was covered with shells, could be so called, and over them, as well as on a seat he had made, was spread a rich carpet; he had also provided large fur cloaks to fence me from the cold, there were besides baskets of the best provisions, some wine, and fresh water.

When night advanced, notwithstanding the most tender and delicate assiduities of my lover, I could not suppress the terror my situation raised in my mind.

We were not above a league from my deserted convent, where if I was retaken, a dreadful death was the inevitable punishment of my apostacy; the roaring of the sea, which as the darkness increased, beat dreadfully over our rock; the wind which blew a perfect hurricane; and lastly, the being in such a place, solely accompanied by and in the power of a man, to whom I was not yet married; were all circumstances, which might singly subdue the fortitude of a stronger mind than mine; what therefore must be my terror, under their accumulated weight?

Yet let me here, for alas! such occasions will too soon cease, do justice to the honor, and delicacy, of my lover's behaviour, during this *more* dreadful night, than the *last* which I had passed in the convent.

It is impossible to conceive any thing, more elegantly tender, than his whole deportment; he wept as he supported my fainting body, and when I recovered, cheered my sinking spirits, with the most encouraging protestations of inviolable love, and honor; he endeavoured to inspire me with courage, by assurance of our perfect safety, which could no other way be secured.

For consider my soul, thou treasure of thy Douglas, said he, pressing my cold hands to his breast, the power, policy and intelligence of our enemies; we have not only the civil power to evade, but the whole Romish church are our inveterate foes.

Oh! thou blessed virgin! thou knowest how deep that dreadful truth sunk into my soul; what, cried I, almost frantic, the holy church? the pious bishop, the good sisterhood, Victoire, are you all the foes of the lost Agnes? let me return, let me expiate with my life for my offences; let me be again received into the blessed pale, I have so wickedly deserted.

Agnes, said my lover, falling at my feet, forbear to stab with thy words, the man who adores thee; if thou hast an atom of love for thy Douglas, forbear to wound him with thy unavailing regret; if indeed, continued he, trembling, thou would'st leave me, conceal from me the hateful truth, least it should rob me of the courage necessary to protect and support thee; if Agnes no longer loves her Douglas, what is life to him?

The agitation he was in during this speech, recalled me to a sense of what was due to a man, who had ventured so much in my escape; whom I loved with unutterable tenderness, and to whose honor, I had so unreservedly committed myself; I became more composed and listened to his soothing voice, 'till worn out with fatigue, I dropt asleep in his arms.

I awoke much refreshed, and found he had gently laid me on the seat which was formed, doubtless for that purpose, and having covered me with the cloaks, had laid himself down at my feet, and slept likewise.

It was full day when we awoke, the sea had retreated from the rock, the wind was hushed, and the beams of the sun penetrated our shelter; all was silent around, and my lover advised our conversation to be in whispers; for, said he, I know if it had not been attended with great danger, Marshall would have furnished us with means to leave the coast.

This day appeared less tedious than the former; it was passed in the most delightful anticipations of the happiness we should enjoy in Switzerland; whither my lover intended to carry me; and as my confidence in him, increased every moment, I became less uneasy in the uncomfortable recess, which by degrees lost its horrors; as my love strengthened for Douglas, my regrets at the sinful step I had taken, insensibly lessened, 'till it was no longer remembered.

The second night passed as the first, with increase of confidence on my side, of love and respect on his, and still we heard nothing of Marshall; we were beginning to lay plans for our future existence, and terrified into a belief, that our friends were involved in our distress, when the sea again beating over our rock, I started, ah! Douglas we are betrayed, I am certain I heard the sound of voices.

He eagerly climbed up the back part of the cavity, come, my Agnes, cried he, here are our friends, we have not a moment to lose; and he carried me in his arms to the open beach, where a person muffled in a cloak, who I found to be Captain Marshall, and a large boat with six men waited.

How are my friends? said I, you have no time for enquiries, replied he, adieu, and adieu, as he put a letter into the hands of Douglas, was all we had time to say.

We embarked and presently lost sight of the shore; not a word was interchanged, the men rowed as if their own lives depended on their expedition, and by the time day broke, we were entirely out of the sight of land—a ship, which appeared at a vast distance was the object our men seemed to have in view, and we reached her about noon.

In the mean while, the letter Marshall put into my lover's hand excited my most lively curiosity; I reminded him of it, and he gave it me to peruse.

The contents will ever be engraved on my mind:—my flight from the convent was not discovered 'till evening; Victoire had vainly sought me, after the conference, which ended much to the displeasure of our superior, as she did not find people, who were not dependant on her favour, quite so partial to her opinion, as those who were—she had searched the garden, the chapel, and every where but Miss Mountague's apartment, where it at last occurred to her, I might be; she therefore abandoned any further pursuit, 'till evening vesper, when not meeting me at a part of my devotion I had never before missed; and Miss Mountague declaring she had not seen me, my poor friend ran distracted to the superior, to beg the pond might be dragged, as she feared from my delirium, and despondency the last night, some dreadful catastrophe.

Her request was complied with, but no information was gained, nor any suspicion of my elopement, 'till one of the lay-servants found my wrapper, and shoes in the closet.

It had happened, that the portress who let me out, was suddenly seized with a dizziness she was accustomed to in her head; and was obliged to quit her station, which was then filled by one of the women belonging to the kitchen; who on being personally directed by the abbess had let Mr. Mountague out.

It was in vain the portress on her recovery, and being told this circumstance, protested she had before opened the gate for Mr. Mountague; all she said, was believed to proceed from the disorder in her head, and treated accordingly; 'till the wrapper, and shoes led to a suspicion, that something more than the wanderings of a disordered imagination was the source of her exclamations.

The affair was directly carried to the inquisition, who issued their warrant for bringing Mr. and Miss Mountague before them; the consul appealed from their power to the king; who was pleased to order those young people to remain unmolested.

Victoire was next sent for, but her protectors were still more powerful, as she was daughter to the French ambassador.

The judges of the inquisition and the priests were the more enraged, as they were thus prevented from convicting the supposed accomplices; and had set every possible engine to work, to discover the culprits; my visits, added Marshall at the convent are suspended, but I receive invitations highly flattering to my hopes from the consul.

The vessel on board which you will be received, as an English traveller and his tutor, is bound to Ancona; but will land you on the shore of Barbary, which coast I have informed the captain the young gentleman has a desire to visit; I added, he had lost his passage from Lisbon in an English frigate, by going too far into the country, when she was under sailing orders; you will be set on shore as agreed, from whence I advise you to use all possible expedition 'till you get out of the power of the church of Rome.

This was the substance of Mr. Marshall's letter; and it was too late to object to his plan, had we been so inclined; we reached the vessel and rewarded our pilots, but were yet far from being at ease; for the captain, notwithstanding his agreement, insisted on touching first at Ancona, from whence he intended to freight for the Barbary shore.

Thus remaining still in the jurisdiction of his holiness, we were under constant apprehensions; nevertheless Douglas, at all risques procured a travelling priest, to give us the nuptial benediction as soon as we arrived at Ancona; from whence fortunately we procured a passage on board a Danish merchant ship to Elsineur.

I must not omit to inform you, that Mr. Douglas accounted for my disguise to the priest who married us, by saying I was an English lady who had fled from my friends, to escape a persecution on account of my religion.

If you consider, my dear brother, the pains this man had taken to get me into his power, the restraint his respectful behaviour must have laid on his libertine nature, and the danger he had exposed himself to, you will conclude his joy at the grand completion of his scheme was great; it was indeed unbounded, and his wife became still dearer, than the Agnes Moncrass, who had exposed herself to so many hazards in following him.

We had after our landing at Elsineur, still a long journey to take, before we reached the spot of our destination; but my husband's courage, and perseverance overcame all difficulties, and we were happily settled in a beautiful villa on the bank of the lake of Geneva, when I had advanced too far in my pregnancy to have encountered any further fatigue.

And this, brother, was the most happy period of my life, oh! it was more than so, it was a continued scene of rapture; the tenderness of my husband, was an inexhaustible source of bliss to me, it was the sweet oblivion in which all memory of the past, and all fears for the future were lost; it lulled my conscience, it soothed my cares, and was the tower of strength on which my hope rested; I loved, I adored him, yet would he often dispute pre-eminence with me, on the fond excess of the passion we felt for each other; but ah! how transitory how short lived was this pleasing calm.

The duke of ——, who was our neighbour, took a particular liking to my husband, and continually invited him to his parties; but my situation was the apology he offered for declining, any, except hunting, which as he was very fond of the sport, he accepted.

The very first time he partook of his favorite diversion, he was brought home, having in his fall from a vicious horse, received two fractures in his leg, and dislocated his collar-bone; and he was otherwise so much bruised, his life was in the most imminent danger.

All recollection of my sufferings at the sight, was obliterated by a total deprivation of my senses? my child's life was lost, and mine also despaired of—my husband recovered enough to be informed of my situation, without danger to himself, before I was restored to my senses. The measure of my iniquities was not yet full, I had not yet suffered the punishment due to the enormity of my offences, the blow was yet to come which I humbly trust, will at the last great account be received in extenuation, I was yet spared to be numbered among the living.

My recovery was slow and doubtful, the distressful solicitude of my husband is not to be expressed; he was himself very weak, and his constant anxiety for me, preyed on his spirits, impaired his constitution, and retarded the cure of his hurts.

His danger roused me from the stupor the fever had left on my nerves; but my husband was so enervated, and the fever on his spirits continued to increase so fast, our physicians advised, as the dernier resort, the air of Montpellier—he was himself alarmed at a prognostic so terrible, and fell into a profound melancholy, from which I exerted my utmost powers to relieve him—but in vain.

We took the road to Montpellier, my heart breaking over my drooping husband, whose soul appalled by fear of death, shrunk in terror from the impending blow; and terrified at the phantoms of his own conscience, was not one moment satisfied, but when he knew I watched him; I was not only his nurse, but his waking guard.

It was in those sad hours which I passed by the bed of the man I adored, trembling at every sigh, and harrowed by every groan, that conscience first awoke my mind to reflections, forgotten in the reciprocal enjoyment of connubial love; I trembled lest the curses denounced against me by the holy church were now beginning to operate, and thought I foresaw in the loss of my beloved husband, the just vengeance due to my broken vow.

It was indeed beginning, but that had been mercy, even his death, had he breathed his last in my arms, would have been a misery, far short of what I was doomed to suffer.

He still continued to grow worse; one night when I had been offering my weeping oraisons to heaven for his recovery, when I had been imploring the Almighty to spare him, yet a little longer. With folded hands, and streaming eyes, he suddenly besought me to pardon him.

I can neither *live* nor *die*, said he, without confessing how I have *injured* the best of women!

Alas! I replied, you have not injured *me*; supposing he alluded to my leaving the convent, *my own heart* misled me, not my Douglas; let not that sin rest on *thy mind*, it is *me*, who am the delinquent, who ought to feel repentance, and suffer for my offence.

Mistaken angel! answered he, gasping for breath, and dost thou think it is the cursed priestcraft of thy vow, that haunts my mind? do not shudder, it is not yet time, when thou shalt know how I have abused thy unsuspecting nature, when thou hearest me confess, that had I died when I had that fall from my horse, which will I fear, at last destroy me; thou, *thou* my virtuous Agnes, and thy child, had it survived, would have been beggars, without *home, friends, fortune, or character*.

Heavenly powers! answered I, what is it you say, is this a delirium, or what fatal mystery are you about to unravel? we might have been homeless, and what wretches who are so can boast of friends? we might have been destitute of support, but surely the hard world would have left me a widow's right to weep, without wounding my fame.—

No, said he, with violence, it would not, for know thou hast no husband, no such being as —Douglas, is in existence, I am an impostor, I have deceived thee—Now then Agnes, do not curse, but forgive me, and take the only amends in my power to offer.

What he further uttered, I know not, I fell lifeless on the bed by his side; he wept, tore his hair, and raved; called for a clergyman, a *protestant* clergyman.

The servant, whom we had brought with us from Geneva, frightened at his violence, actually ran to the house of an English nobleman, whose family was then at Montpellier, on account of his ill health, who had in their suite a domestic chaplain; him she intreated to come to her master, who was dying, and it was not 'till her return on opening the curtains she discovered my situation.

The good clergyman assisted in my recovery, and in calming the transports of my husband; who without adverting to my vow, or hinting at my elopement from the convent, made the same confession to him, he had before done to me; and implored him to prevail on me to forgive, and receive him *now* as my legal husband; which would, at least, secure to me and mine the protection of his family.

How my soul rose at the deceit practised on my unsuspecting heart, how I detested the imposter one moment, and adored him the next; how often my rejection threw him into despair, from which my frantic tenderness relieved him; you, my brother, who have felt the various excesses of the passion which has ruined your sister, may perhaps, though but imperfectly conceive; let me then hasten to say, that to the reasoning of the divine, and the entreaties of my husband, was added a tender pleader, more interested in the event than myself; I was a second time pregnant, and at length consented to become, according to the rites of the protestant church, the wife of *James Neville*, an Englishman of good family, and as it afterwards proved, heir to large estates in Gloucestershire.

I have already, my dear brother, far exceeded the limits of an epistolary correspondent; but these letters are from the dead; the heart that indites, will cease to throb; the hand that writes, to tremble; life's fitful fever will be past, before you receive them; and all that remains of your once loved sister, will be the daughter of the barbarous man, who ruined her eternal peace, and abandoned her to sorrow, to want, and to the gnawings of the worm which never dies. But I will now close this first packet, lest a confusion should arise to give the best of brothers, one trouble that can be avoided, in the arrangement of the many sheets which will be filled with the sad story, and blotted with the tears of

AGNES NEVILLE.

LETTER.

St. Clare's posthumous Letter continued.

IT seemed as if revealing his guilty secret was the only thing wanting to recover Mr. Neville; his health and spirits returned with additional lustre; he called me the saviour of his soul and body, and Mr. Dormer, (who was the only person present at our marriage, besides one witness *he* procured on whose prudence he said he could rely) often heard the grateful and tender effusions of a heart, now more endeared to me than ever.

Apprehending that our change of name would excite curiosity, and give occasion for impertinent enquiries; we did not venture to be seen in public at Montpellier, where there then were many people Mr. Neville knew; but left that place as soon as possible, and returned to Geneva, still as Mr. and Mrs. Douglas; where we meant to dispose of our property, and remove to some distant part, either of Switzerland, or Germany (as we feared to venture on catholic ground) and there assume our real name; for he confessed he had reasons, as cogent, as the fictitious ones he had before assigned, which prevented his going to England.

By the time we returned to our house, I was not in a situation to bear the fatigue of travelling; and the continual agitation I had suffered rendered my husband tenderly apprehensive for my life; quiet was certainly necessary, and that I now enjoyed in every sense.

Agnes was born at this happy period; her father received her as the choicest gift of heaven, and how dear she has ever been to the heart of her fond mother, God only knows.

The little cherub was for some months very weakly, and we were in constant apprehension of losing her. The pleasing painful cares, which the sweet stranger brought into the world with her, added to our anxiety to *preserve* her, so occupied us; that we no longer thought of changing our residence; and knowing we could at any time assume our name, I became careless about the matter—I had my fond husband—my lovely child—a pleasant though humble home, where peace and plenty reigned—and what more could I have enjoyed, had I been dignified by the most splendid title?

My husband received his pension through a banker at Paris, who remitted it to him under his feigned name of Douglas; from this person he received an express, which though it gave him a momentary concern, filled him with transport; and oh! how he promised, and swore and how deceived!

A relation from whom he had expectations, was dead, and for us only he rejoiced, his wife should be the Lady Bountiful of his estates—his Agnes the heiress—and himself the happiest of men! He had some affairs to settle in England before he could remove us, but he would go and arrange them, and return to take us in triumph, to his family, and country.

He left us—the *cruel!* barbarous! the worse than savage! left his fond adoring wife—his smiling infant, to grief! to anguish! to despair!

For the first two months I had letters from him every mail. But after that, it was no longer my *husband*—my *lover*—my *friend!* it was Douglas, the impostor, *Douglas*, for by that name he always signed his letters, and *I* from habit unhappily did the same.

I remonstrated on his cruel neglect—bewailed my own hard fate, and entreated his pity to my unprotected state, his compassion for his child; with alike ill success. For some months he ceased to write at all, but at the end of the eighth he returned—

Yes—the inhuman returned—to impose afresh on my credulity.

The affair he hinted at, as preventing his residence in England, was again, he said, taken up by his enemies (who were people in power) with such acrimony, that he was not safe even in Geneva; *now* that they had *discovered* his retreat: he only ventured to come to me to settle the mode of sending my remittances; he must instantly return; if the disagreeable affair did not terminate to his advantage, heaven knew when he should see me again; two hundred pounds a year would be paid to my order as Agnes Douglas; and without one tender embrace, one look at his poor infant, he quitted our *now miserable* dwelling, with as much haste, as though he feared some dreadful contagion was in it.

The blow was so sudden, so unexpected, and so dreadful; that it threw me into a fever of the brain, from which it was three months before I recovered.

My little Agnes was thought to be dying, when returning reason bid me remember I was a *mother*; and maternal affection was roused at the sight of my sick child; who whether from neglect, or natural weakness, was not only ill, but her little limbs for want of exercise were swelled and contracted, and the fairy as we used to call her, (merely from her sprightliness and agility) was now in danger of becoming a cripple. This sight while it struck to my heart like the icy hand of death, called forth all my faculties; and my sorrows were awhile suspended in the care of my lovely child; whom it pleased heaven to restore, with all the bloom of healthful infancy to her mother's prayer.

You will hardly be persuaded, brother, that so exceedingly simple was I, I actually believed the hasty tale my husband had left my credulity to digest; and that all my senses after the recovery of my child, were absorbed in sorrow for him; I was in constant expectation of his return, and even reproached myself for chiding him for his neglect.

Ah! thought I, at the instant my letters were given to him, he might be overwhelmed with sorrow—do I know he is not now so? was it for *me*, his fond *wife*—the *mother* of his *child*, to aggravate distress, it is *his* misfortune I am not permitted to alleviate? he cannot abandon his wife and child; no! he is himself enduring the woes his absence inflicts on us.

Thus fondly flattering my hopes, and confiding in his honor, I passed two heavy years; but at the end of the second, I was reduced to distress of another kind. My draft

was protested. Monsieur Noverre, the banker who had hitherto paid my pension was dead, and the answer sent by his successor was—that Mr. Neville had closed his account with them.

I should have before told you, that as the pension was paid to my husband by order of Lord Ruthven, I still thought it was to that nobleman's bounty, I owed the subsistence of myself and child: I was therefore not a little surprised, when I found Mr. Neville in his own name had negociated it with the banker; yet, loth still to give up my fond confidence in his principles, I hoped in spite of reason, that a little time would clear up this, and every other ambiguous circumstance, to the credit of *him*, whose *honor*, it was both my duty, and inclination to support.

In the country where we then lived, religion was so tolerated, it was difficult to say what was the established doctrine, most adhered to by the inhabitants. We had a Romish chapel, and a Lutheran church in our little village: the priest to whom I confessed, was a man of unaffected piety, fine sense and universal charity: my sweet Agnes, he used to call his playfellow, and seldom took his evening walk without her. To him, I opened my heart, when having lived another year on the credit my good neighbour gave me, and the sale of what trifling valuables I possessed; I found myself utterly destitute.

Father St. Jerome was the meek practiser of the virtues he taught, he joined with me in opinion, that my husband was more unfortunate than faulty.

Perhaps, said the good man, the nature of the distress in which he is involved, may oblige him to conceal himself; Lord Ruthven may have withdrawn his bounty, and your husband is ignorant of your situation. I have correspondents in England, and will cause enquiry to be made; in the mean while, I will be your almoner: the generous priest was as good as his word, but, oh! brother! how can I describe the anguish I was now fated to endure.

Father Jerome came one morning earlier than his accustomed hour. You have told me Mrs. Douglas, said he, with unusual coldness, and gravity; that your husband and yourself assumed the name of Douglas for *family reasons*; you have made me the confidant of your distress, and I have been willing to approve myself your friend, are you at liberty, may I ask—to disclose those *reasons* to me?

The reverend interrogator looked earnestly in my face, while he was thus solemnly speaking; my countenance underwent a variety of changes, and well might the good man (who knew no disguise in his own actions, and who could suggest no laudable reason why, with respect to him, there should be any in mine) mistake my evident confusion for guilt.

I could not comprehend of what utility *to me*, or satisfaction *to him*, it could be to expose my husband's faults; on the contrary, I believed it my duty to conceal them, to the utmost of my power; when I could do it without injury to my honor, and my religion; yet how to evade so home an interrogation, and to account for its being put was equally hard.

I have always been taught to hold the inventor of a falshood in abhorrence, nor ever could prevail on myself to consent to evil, that *good* might come of it: after some hesitation therefore, I answered, as I thought my duty to my husband demanded, without violating the truth; that I was *not* at liberty to disclose the reasons for our conduct.

To my unutterable grief, the good father instantly left my house; nor did he as usual call for his playfellow, or condescend to take any notice, either of *her* or *me*, when we met him in our little rambles round the village.

On Friday when I went to mass, instead of that consoling manner that always reached my soul with comfort; he went through the duty of his office, regarding me with a stern, and angry countenance; and as soon as service was over, instead of those benign greetings that were wont to render me respectable to the rest of his flock, he turned into his house without speaking.

Oh! my dear brother! I thought my heart would burst; the only friend (and him raised by heaven) to me and my child, to be thus suddenly and unaccountably prejudiced against me; to be thus cast from the protection of benevolence, condemned unheard.

Alas! what had I done? what tongue so vile to calumniate so very wretched and inoffensive a being? but was this *justice*, was it *religion*, to add to the sorrows of the *poor* and *needy*? how could I have offended father St. Jerome, yet grant I had been so unhappy as to lay under his displeasure, would so good, so holy a man forget the respect due to misfortune?

Oh! no! said I, suddenly stopping, some dreadful cause there is, but *I* am innocent; why then should *I* therefore fear to ask it? I will go back, I will demand of father Jerome the reasons for his behaviour, I will at least know in what I am criminal, and I returned to the village with this resolution.

When I entered the dwelling of the charitable priest, he was distributing alms to the aged of his flock, with the beams of ineffable pleasure glowing on his countenance; my appearance quickly changed the placid smile, into a disgustful frown.

Far from being dismayed at a reception I knew it must cause *him some* pain to give me, it inspired me with courage; I waited 'till his pensioners were dismissed, and then, in a firm voice though not unaccompanied with tears; entreated he would inform me on what account I had incurred his displeasure.

Your own heart, madam, said he, if you scrutinize it will inform you.

My heart, father, is the seat of misery, but— he interrupted me.

It is the seat of depravity, Mrs. Douglas, had *I* deserved, madam, to be charged with your commissions; to expose my own character, and that of my friend, in soliciting a married man, to make provision for a mistress he had deserted?

I was petrified—he proceeded:

Had you, Mrs. Douglas, put on (as became you) the garb of a magdalen; and solicited through me, the means to bring up your child, and support yourself in a state of penitence, and humility; if I had not succeeded in my application to your paramour, there *are* well disposed christians, there *are some virtuous women*, who would not withhold their alms from so pious a purpose.

Let me comprehend you, sir, answered I, with a mixture of spirit and amazement! who are you describing? to what do you allude? and why are *my* ears wounded with such shocking expletives? speak to me sir, in the language you were used to; let me learn from you the plain meaning of words I am so little accustomed to hear.

There, madam, said he, giving me a letter—you have really more natural confidence than I expected—read that—I am going to my closet, you will not perhaps think of demanding a second audience, but should any further explanation be necessary, you know where to find me: with these words he left the room.

I held the important letter in my hand, which was to unveil a mystery I longed, yet feared to develope; my agitation was so violent, and my hands trembled to that degree, I tore the paper in half before I could see the contents—oh! the horror of that moment is still present to my memory, even *now* I tremble at the recollection—it is too much—I lay down my pen—my sight fails me—

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End of the Third Volume