

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

In *FOUR VOLUMES*.

Inscrib'd with Permission to Col. HUNTER.

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

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

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MDCCLXXXIX.

AGNES DE-COURCI,

A

DOMESTIC TALE.

To GENERAL MONCRASS.

*St. Clare's Posthumous Letter continued.*

Oh that the painful task was ended, that having reposed my sad story in my brother's noble bosom, I might close my weary eye-lids, and no more behold iniquity—oh shut me up for-ever—let me lose in the grave the memory of my sins and the bitterness of recollection—when will this rebellious spirit be subdued? when shall my soul reject vanity?

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The letter was from father Dominick, chaplain to the french minister at London: it contained an account of having succeeded in his enquires after Mr. Neville, who had been married a long time to the only daughter of the Earl of Ruthven; that he was in possession of large family estates, and a great personal fortune; that supposing from those circumstances, this could not be the man after whom he was requested to enquire; he had waited on Lord Ruthven respecting the annuity, who was much surprized, and offended at the application, as *his* allowance to Mr. *Neville abroad*, had naturally ceased, when that gentleman married his daughter, and came into possession of his own large fortune.

Father Dominick further added, that he then thought Mr. Neville must have first assigned, and then continued this annuity to some relation; but on enquiry of himself, he acknowledged *he* was the person who had gone by the name of Douglas, that he left a woman, with whom he had some time cohabited, at Geneva, that the matter of the annuity had slipt his memory, but that he certainly meant to continue it: at the same time as he was a married man, and his wife one of the most amiable of her sex, he entreated the matter might be kept secret, least it should disturb her tranquility.

God knows how I was supported thro' the reading of this letter; yet still loth to believe such *villainy*, (*unheard of by me*) could exist in a human breast; a latent hope would arise, even against possibility, that some mistake or misrepresentation had deceived father Dominick, oh brother,

“Love what we see can from our sight remove,  
“And things invisible are seen by love.”

Contrary to the expectation of the good priest, I entered his closet, and after calmly re-perusing the killing letter, told him the real reason of my taking the name of

Douglas, the name of the priest who married us at Ancona, and also that of the protestant divine, who repeated the ceremony at Montpellier.

Never was there a more instantaneous change than that which appeared in father Jerome—he wept over me—and declared he would not rest 'till he had probed the heart of my husband: he would not believe his friend could be mistaken, he knew (he said) how cautious he would be of deceiving *him*; you are not my child (continued he) equal to the fraud and vice which are every day to be met in this bad world, but you shall go to England, I am myself preparing to remove to Paris, where I am recalled by my patron the Marquis St. Lawrens.

I shrieked with surprize, the Marquis St. Lawrens, repeated I—ah! where is he?—and where is Victoire?—that amiable, that dear friend—does she exist?—alas! is the poor Agnes totally obliterated from her remembrance?

What is it I hear? answered the good father—Agnes!—ah wretch is it thou?—and has the Almighty found thee then—does his judgment pursue thee—has he arrested thy fugitive soul—dost thou feel his vengeance? And is it the wretch who tempted thee to forsake thy God—by whom thou also art forsaken?

I heard no more—the forfeiture of life! ah what was that! to the agonizing reproaches of my conscience, which roused by the just severity of the Priest, flash'd conviction on my senses: I fell insensate and prostrate before him.

Why should I shock you, with an account of my sufferings?—I was carried home to my miserable dwelling, but not abandoned by the father; who continued with holy zeal to paint the enormity of my crime, and the certain destruction of my soul, if a life of the strictest penitence was not immediately begun, and if I did not return to the humble practice of the most severe duties of the order I had forsaken.

Ah! my child!—my child! cried I—my sweet injured child!—if I *forsake* thee *who* will *protect* thee?

Vain wretch, answered the good man—*thy protection!* how darest thou, who art an outcast of heaven, presume thy protection will avail her aught? rather instantly leave thy innocent child to any outrage of fate, than draw on *her* the curse of *thy* apostacy.

O brother! this was too hard a task; I put myself entirely under the guidance of the holy man, but implored him to spare to me my child.

On condition of my binding myself to leave the world, immediately on my return, he consented to my taking the child with me, and going to England; there to prove my marriage, and do justice to my poor Agnes; where he enjoined me to leave her under the care of father Dominick, to whom he would write; and who would he was sure, procure for her the protection of the ambassador, to whom he was chaplain—Want no money, added the charitable priest, it is in my power to supply you with, do justice on this heretic, and save your own soul.

I left my house, and family matters, to be disposed of by my ghostly friend, for the advantage of those good people who had given me credit; and set out on my journey to England, with my dear Agnes; the most miserable wretch that breathed the vital air.

Ah brother! think on my distraction—you now know my Agnes—she was then just five years old; her natural beauty, undoubtedly greater in my eye, than that of any other person, her manner, and her temper equally engaging, and her opening sense, all that my most sanguine wish could make it.—Figure to yourself the fondest of mothers, with such a child in her arms, not daring to lift up her soul to the God she had offended—the Saviour she had abandoned—to ask a blessing on the innocent offspring of her guilt.

Then how soon was I to part with her forever! oh what a sacrifice did guilt demand!—what floods of tears flowed on my sleeping infant! for while she was awake, so great was her sensibility at that early period of her life, my tears un-nerved her little frame, and my sorrows were sure to affect her health; in love therefore to her, I was obliged to conceal the anguish that filled my soul, even to madness.

Many—many an hour have I hung over her, 'till my senses have forsook me, and I have been either left in a torpid state of insensibility, or seized with fits of despair, which often tempted me to end a being destined to bear the keenest misery—but the dreadful *hereafter*, the fear of meeting the eye of my angry Creator—blessed be his name, prevented me; and a flood of tears generally calmed my mind after those transports of grief, and passion.

In this situation of mind, I reached London, where my first care was to find father Dominick; who, as soon as he was apprized of my arrival, informed me Mr. Neville was in town; and that, if I wished to see him before we made our public claims, in order to be certain of his identity, he knew the hour at which he usually went out, and we might take a hackney-coach and wait in the street near his door—we did so.—

Ah my brother! there needed no more to prove it was indeed *my* Neville—Oh pardon, pardon merciful God!—and oh, my dearest brother! do you too forgive your miserable sister, if she owns, even now, she could gaze with rapture on the dear—the well-known face,—could she one moment separate the image of the man she loved—from the most wicked, and obdurate of human beings.

At sight of him I fainted in the arms of father Dominick, and even Agnes, tho' so young when left by her cruel father her sweet face glowing with extacy, cried out, Mon papa—mon papa.

Father Dominick brought me back to my lodgings with hardly any signs of existence: with the certainty of Neville's identity, the proofs of his guilt came in such undeniable forms to my senses, that altho' I went to England—resolved, had he been innocent, to tear myself from him, to return in penitence to the altar I had perjured myself

to leave; yet the confirmed depravity of him for whom I had broke my holy vow, and given up salvation, struck to my heart: a slow fever immediately seized my spirits, which continued two months; and it was but at intervals, I knew even my child.

During this period, it pleased Heaven to deprive me of the only friend in whom I confided: my confessor, the blessed Priest to whose pious exhortations I owe the returning mercy of God, was called out of this world, to one where I trust my purified spirit will recognize his.

His effects were claimed by the heirs; and his death, which happened at the country Chateau of the Marquis St. Lawrens, being sudden, he was so far from having made any provision for me, that the memorandums of the different sums he had advanced to, and for me, not being erased from his tablets, by the same mail that brought to father Dominick the account of his death, he was also desired by the heirs to procure from me, the money the deceased had advanced for my use.

Father Dominick was too charitable to be rich; he was indeed at this time labouring under many difficulties in his circumstances, occasioned by his being bound in a considerable sum for a member of his church, who had deceived the world, and broke his faith with his friend.—

Nevertheless, my situation was a bond on his humanity nothing could prevail on him to break; he went to Neville and charged him with the crime he had been guilty of, in marrying his present Lady; and the injury offered *me* and his daughter, by such an atrocious breach of the laws of society.

The trembling culprit half-owning, and half-denying the charge, desired the Priest to call on him the next morning.

But he had then acquired more fortitude, and positively denied his marriage; altho' he acknowledged that he had lived with me, and that Agnes was his daughter: he offered to secure to me the former annuity, and to settle a handsome sum on the child, if I would sign a general release and return to Geneva.

Father Dominick represented to him my situation both of mind and body; but added, he was certain I would accept no compromise—that the Priest who married us at Ancona, was now by the particular favor of a cardinal to whom he was related, raised to the dignity of a prelate; and his word would be received as an indisputable voucher.

Who do you speak of said Neville? I never was at Ancona—far be it from me to dispute the word of the prelate you allude to, but I am sure he will not say he married James Neville to Mrs. Douglas,

You observe brother—poor wretch!

But said my friend, Mr. Dormer, the protestant divine will not be persuaded *he* did not hear the confession of Mr. Neville, who had married Mrs. Douglas under that feigned name; nor, that he did not repeat the ceremony at Mr. Neville's particular request.

Possibly not replied he coolly, you will do well to find him:

He is living sir said Dominick,

I do not deny it father, answered he.

He is in England rejoined Dominick, or was not six weeks back.

Neville smiled, and Dominick saw it was a smile of triumph; he was hastening from him to make fresh enquiries after Mr. Dormer, who we afterwards found was in India, but was detained to have the honesty of his nature, the rectitude of his principles, and the honor of his religion insulted, by the offer of a thousand pounds if he would disgrace himself, by conveying your poor, ruined, and then senseless sister out of the kingdom.—

The reverend father trembled with indignation—Never sir, said he, will I again degrade myself by holding converse with you, 'till I can openly fix the odium you deserve on your despicable character.

Sad accounts those my brother, for your Agnes when her reason, but not her health returned; yet eager to prosecute my claim for the sake of my orphan, as it was then likely she would soon be, and dreading to be a burthen on the good Priest; I formed a resolution as extraordinary as desperate.

I wrote to Neville—my letter was brought back—he was gone to his country seat—he had left the poor creature, his legal wife, *sick, insensible, and destitute*; his beautiful child, *poor*, and but for the charity of some good catholic thro' father Dominick *friendless*—Yes—the hard-hearted man had taken a party with him to his villa, *to shoot*, that was the servant's answer.—

Oh thou Almighty—thou long-suffering Saviour!

I procured his address, and sent my letter by post; the contents of which were to inform him without one reproach, that if he did not do me justice by acknowledging his marriage, I would go to St. James's and cast myself and child at the feet of the Queen of England—that I would declare my wrongs in the presence of the nobility of the country, and rely on the mercy, as well as justice of a woman, who was herself the first *wife* and *mother* in the world: I gave him *one month* to consider of my demand.

A letter to Dominick by return of post without a name—but which I knew to be his hand and seal requested a longer time for consideration, which by Dominick's advice I agreed to.

The interval I employed in giving such instructions to my child, as were most likely to leave lively impressions of her mother's fondness in her memory, in humbling my soul before heaven, and in regaining the bodily strength I had lost in my illness.

I was one morning weeping over my little girl, when Dominick entered the room; you are undone madam said he—you must fly this moment—I commit a sin in giving you this notice; and he threw down two papers one directed to Agnes Moncrass, the other to himself.

That to him was a letter from the Marquis of St. Lawrens; it gave him “notice of an information laid before his holiness against him, for harbouring and abetting an apostate nun, and said, no trouble or expence would be spared, *now she was discovered*, to bring the sinful wretch back to a sense of her guilt; father St. Jerome added the Marquis made us acquainted with the miserable fate of the undone creature, my daughter, whose noviciate was spent with her, was content to find that her penitence equalled her crime, and gave up the thought of ever hearing of her more; but now she will perhaps be returned to her convent at Lisbon, and undergo the merciless sentence of the inquisition, Victoire is much distressed, and begs you will give the poor wretch the inclosed; you have my authority to take care of her child, which we hear is a female; and if the heretic, her father will not acknowledge her, send her to us, the Marchioness will protect her.

“It would be absolutely necessary should Dominick be disposed to assist me, (the Marquis further said) for me to leave the place where I then was, and conceal myself in some remote part of the kingdom, where the catholic religion was least known; that so I might escape the enquiries, which tho’ covert, would be surely set on foot; let her not, continued he, depend on the protection of the laws of the kingdom she is in—you well know the *possibility* of conveying from thence, criminals who have not again been heard of.”

To gratify the ardent request of his daughter it was, that the Marquis took this step in my favor; on whom the censure of the church would be incurred if the transaction became known; he therefore sent this letter by a trusty messenger, who had orders to travel post with it, and recommended inviolable secrecy to father Dominick, of whose integrity he had no doubt—

The other letter which was addressed to me, was from Victoire—ah brother! what a letter! but you will see, and know the beloved writer; the abbess of the convent D——, my Victoire, will when her St. Clare is no more; transfer the tenderness she has ever felt for the ill fated mother, to her innocent child—she will also love the brother of her *then*—yes Victoire! I feel I shall then again be *your sister*.

You know the dreadful punishment not indeed more *dreadful*, than *deserved* inflicted, particularly where the inquisitorial powers is held in any kind of reverence, on the few of the professed sisterhood who have been so wicked as to break their vows,\* and may conceive the terror I was in; gladly would I immediately have followed the advice of

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The punishment here alluded to is that of being shut up forever between four walls, without light or sustenance.\*

See letter LXXII, of Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.

my true friend, but how to disguise myself, how to escape present, and future detection?—there was not a moment to lose—I took—oh my God! what an embrace—of my child, and having hastily changed the dress I had on, for one I had not yet worn in England; I wrote a line for father Dominick, and sent a catholic servant he had procured to wait on me, with my child to him.

I then immediately left my lodgings on foot, without knowing whither to go, or how to inform myself of the part of England, where according to the Marquis's hint, I should be least likely to meet any of my own religion: after rambling in uncertain terror two hours from street to street, I came to a field which led to the high road, where soon after a stage-coach passed me, which was going to a large town on the western road; weary and indisposed, I was obliged to run every risk of discovery, as I found it impossible either to pursue my undetermined way or to return back on foot; I therefore agreed with the driver, and by the particular providence of God, met a female fellow traveller, to whose humanity I was afterwards indebted for my life.

This good creature, who kept a little shop at the place where we were going; had been to London to fetch from the inoculating hospital, a young orphan girl, whom previous to her taking apprentice, she chose as she informed me should have the small pox; and then proceeded to shew me what a fine sort she had had, how little she was likely to be marked, and how well she had got over the distemper.

I took the infection in that moment, my heart sunk, I conceited the girl had a particular smell, although her mistress assured me she had been above a month well, and out of the hospital; and in short, a sudden faintness came over me which alarmed the woman, who then thought of asking me if I had had the distemper; on finding I had not, she very feelingly regretted her imprudence, begged, instead of going to the Inn where the coach stopped, if I had no acquaintance at Reading, that I would accompany her to her house, and let what would happen she would take care of me: I was the more easily prevailed on to accept her friendly offer, as I knew I had money about me, sufficient to defray my expences, whether I lived, or died; and as I found my indisposition increase every moment.

Twenty-one days my dear brother was my life despaired of, and as if God Almighty doomed me to *feel*, and *know*, my reliance must be on *Him* alone; the beauty which had been my ruin, was destroyed by the distemper; besides the marks which my face still retains, the virulence of the disorder left a disagreeable redness on my skin; the long-eyelashes once the delight of my false husband, were half destroyed, and my eyes too weak, and too sore to bear the light, were no longer objects to excite admiration.

No brother! it was not a vain pride of person, *that* was entirely annihilated; the desertion of Neville, spoke the futility of personal beauty too decidedly to be mistaken: it was *him* the yet dear, the yet *loved father* of my *Agnes*, for whom my heart sunk when I beheld my own altered face—yes the pang was torture, it was *Neville's*.

Ah! thought I, he may now turn disgusted from a face he no longer knows; he may deny his wedded Agnes, she exists no longer; those, and they were witnessed by floods of tears, were my first regrets, but they were also the last struggles of sinful passion; and religion soon reconciled me to the loss of beauty.

But said I, and my heart bounded in rapture; I may now embrace my child, I may fold her to my fond maternal heart, and I may again behold Victoire; severe in virgin purity, in religious fervor as she is, when I can convince her of the sincerity of my repentance, when she is acquainted with my suffering, her soul will re-acknowledge the friend of her youth, and oh heavenly extacy! I may yet be received into the bosom of our holy church without fear of temporal torture.

I need not remark to you, how unlikely it was I should be known with the marks I have described; since you had not the least recollection of the face, of your once well known sister: I continued at Reading 'till I had recovered my strength, and nothing left to distinguish my face, but its homeliness; when I took leave of my hostess, and returned to London.

My first grand object was to see if father Dominick would know me; I accordingly went to the chapel, where I took care to stand so as to attract his notice, and afterwards received the sacrament at his hands, without his having the most remote recollection of my person.

I then wrote to him by post; but as I could not be sure the worthy man might not, particularly if he returned to France, be questioned concerning me, by some of the devotees the wicked Neville had contrived to inform of his protection of me; I forbore to expose him to the disagreeable alternative, of varying from the truth, or betraying me; and only acquainted him, I was out of danger, without informing him of particulars; I implored him to tell me what he had done with my child, and hinted my intention of returning to the religious life I had so wickedly deserted.

His answer confirmed my resolution; my child he said, had been received by the Marchioness St. Lawrens; on whom her beauty, and innocence had gained so much, that she condescended to pass her to her friends as a relation of her own, and called her Agnes De-Courci.

You know the family brother, it is one of the first in France; and the Marchioness was the flower of it when the Marquis espoused her: my child thus nobly protected was placed as boarder in the convent where Victoire was then a professed sister, and now is Superior.

The affection and tenderness shewn my poor child by the sister of my heart was not therefore noticed; it was natural for her to be attached to a relation of the Marchioness, and Agnes was not only beloved by her, the whole sisterhood, considering her as a future member, were fond of the little boarder.

I again addressed the good father in terms of the deepest gratitude; and told him, I was resolved to give the wicked Neville up to the vengeance of Heaven; but that as he (father Dominick) was in possession of all the proofs of my marriage, except the testimony of Mr. Dormer, who was then abroad; I implored him on that gentleman's return, to obtain one also from him, and send all my papers to the Marquis St. Lawrens; not doubting if that nobleman lived; but that when I was no more, my child would be established by law, the real heiress of Mr. Neville; as his prior marriage with me, must annul his latter one with Lady Mary Ruthven.

My next step will surprize you—I wrote, and sent by post to Mr. Neville this one line;—

“Pay to father Dominick one thousand  
“pounds, on account of the lost  
“Agnes Neville.”

I gave an account of this transaction to father Dominick, and informed him, my intention being, under an assumed name, to procure admittance into one of the most rigid order of nuns, which I could not do without money, I had demanded a sum as my *right* from Neville, I would not accept as a *favor*, to enable me to compass the now first wish of my heart—if he paid it, I begged father Dominick to reimburse himself all the expences he had been at on my account, and remit the rest for Clara Valierre to a banker's at Paris, where I immediately went.

In eight days, Dominick, to *his* surprize, received a draft for the sum I wrote for, tho' not I confess to *mine*; as I had no doubt but the man who had taken such cruel pains to rid himself of my persecution, would gladly part with a sum of money, in hopes he should hear no more of a woman he had injured so vilely.

The father also informed me, my friend the Marquis had paid, and that very liberally, all my debts to him, and to the heirs of father St. Jerome—the good man assured me of his constant prayers, told me he was going to Bologne as the Duke he was chaplain to was dead, having left him a comfortable provision, and desired I would on any future exigence apply to him.

Thus was all care for my temporal welfare drawing to a period; I left Paris, and journied to Abbeville, where I entered the convent as a lay-sister in the name of Clara; and had the comfort of often confessing to the same good Prelate, who in his priest's habit had first married me at Ancona.

Here my dear brother, the holy silence of the sequestered walls formed a solemn contrast to the busy scenes in which I had lately been engaged; my heart was soon weaned from all sinful attraction, maternal love, and affection for Victoire, only held a place in a soul I now wholly dedicated to God: but my sin, which I durst not confess, hung in terror

over every hope of eternal peace; the abstinence and penance I endured were yet too weak to expiate my offence; the sisterhood who knew not the magnitude of my crime, and who only witnessed the sincerity of my repentance, added Saint to my name, in token of the respect they bore me; and after six years I took courage to travel to Paris, and presented myself at the convent D——, where Victoire is now Abbess,

And here my brother, your sister drops her languid pen.

To paint the virtuous joy, the undeviating affection, with which my Victoire received the poor penitent to her arms—to say with what more than maternal care, she bred my Agnes—to speak my obligations to her *friendship*—my admiration of her constant *goodness*, my humble veneration of her *piety*—brother it is too much for mortal power!—Now! the blessed *now!* when you read this last address from your sister, will she be able to do justice, to the benevolent spirit of the *woman*, the *friend*, the *saint*, in whose holy friendship she hopes to spend an *endless eternity*—then only—when purified by the pardon of my offences, can I dare to say my soul may mingle with hers—long may my Victoire be spared for the edification, and example of the world, before her beatification shall again join her to her departed friend.

The history of my sorrows, the poignancy of my regrets, and the perfidy of Neville, were lessons her own experience could not teach her, nor the goodness of her heart comprehend.

Ah in what soothing sounds, did the consoling voice of friendship reach my afflicted soul; she presented my child to me, with increased beauty and expanded understanding,—already had Agnes exhibited bright specimens of that docility, and intuitive mind, which at a very early period distinguished her at the convent; and my gratitude to Victoire, and love for Agnes, increased, as I observed the fine accomplishments were blended with an unaffected respect to religion, and that true politeness, received its best polish from true piety.

I had the comfort of embracing my child every year; when indisposition prevented my going to Paris, Victoire visited Abbeville, without any one's suspecting, either, that the little boarder was my child, or that I was the apostate Agnes.

Yet notwithstanding the alteration of my face—my change of name—and the sincere penitence with which I humbled myself before God; the temporal punishment due to my crime, constantly filled me with terror, and anxiety: It is many years since I ceased to wish to live, but a fate so terrible I had wanted courage to meet—and ah my brother! my child bore hard on my peace, and the resignation due to his will whom I had offended; impotent indeed, were my cares, ineffectual my solicitude; alas! what could I do but pray for her? yet a transient gleam of future hope, a fond anticipation of a something yet in embryo, that would support, and protect the innocent victim to a *father's guilt*, often darted on my mind, and gave a momentary relief to the despair that oppressed me; although I could form no idea, from whence a wretch so lost, could expect comfort.

At last *comfort, hope and joy* appeared, and the welcome triumvirate wore the form of my dear, long lost brother: even in the sequestered gloom that pervaded our severe sisterhood, that noble act of the King of England; which will render his name immortal, who restored the heirs of the proscribed enemies of his ancestors to their country and fortunes, was received with joy; and many more than my unhappy self; hailed the *power of mercy* with rapture, and veneration; soon did Victoire bless me with the news, that Moncrass yet lived to claim, and to receive our forfeited estates; with this welcome communication, I also received her warm wishes, and those of the Marquis and Marchioness that I would endeavour to influence my brother in favor of my injured child.

What a task was this, how could I dare to appear before my brother? how implore him to pardon a crime, I never could forgive myself? how wish to precipitate him into a quarrel, with so fiery, and impenetrable a spirit, as that of Neville? was he restored to his natal honor, and estate after living so long in oblivion, to be involved in fresh troubles? troubles the more to be feared, as the fame of an injured sister was to be vindicated, the rights of an oppressed niece to be asserted, and a wretch to be forced into the practice of every sacred duty, who had basely violated them all.

Yet on the other hand, my own life drawing near its period, how should I answer to my God, and to my child, if I refused to claim for her the protection of her noble uncle? If *her mother* neglected to procure for her the support of the only person who could and should establish her just right to birth and fortune, whose honor being by ties of blood blended with hers would be her natural and best defence.

Long—long my dearest Moncrass, did your unhappy sister hesitate; long did her conscious guilt and fallen spirit shrink from the idea of exposing all her follies bare to the eye of her noble brother; 'till at length, hearing that Neville no longer lived, and feeling that my miserable existence was rapidly approaching to an end, I was encouraged by the justice, as well as the necessity of—this one—this last effort—and resolved to undertake the journey; to cast myself, and my poor fatherless child with all our misfortunes at your feet—you received us like *yourself*, and I felt in your first embrace, all the dignity of our noble father blended with the mild tenderness of our beloved mother.

In compassion to my fears that a discovery of my person would lead to a conviction of my crime; and in reverence to that holy law which enjoined severe penitence for such atrocious iniquity as mine; you agreed to conceal the birth and affinity, of my Agnes, and to postpone the enforcing her natural rights, 'till her mother had paid the great debt of nature; and stood with all her offences on her head in the presence of *him* who only *could* know, that her repentance had expiated her guilt —

*That period is now arrived*, the apostate nun, who abandoned her God, and perjured herself at the doors of his house; the, wretched wife of the cruel Neville, in her turn rejected and deserted; no longer groans under the weight of the guilt and sorrow, her own weakness, and his barbarity inflicted—her emancipated spirit unincumbered by her

frail body, *now* soars above the reach of injury; *now* finds refuge where all its aspirations have been long bent—*now* reposes in peace, after all the storms of sin, and passion, on the *bosom* of her *God*.

You Victoire, will receive the last sigh of your poor Agnes; you will see, and pity the pangs, which *friendship*, *fraternal love*, and *maternal fondness* will inflict on her departing spirit.

Ah can I forever part with my sweet girl? can I bear to know that I shall never more behold the manly irradiating countenance of my beloved brother?

Victoire from thee too I must part: nature will groan in the anguish of this eternal separation—yet it is not eternal—we shall meet again, again join in those rapturous orisons, which in the days of innocence united me to thee—be a mother to my child, fail not to point out to her the only path that will lead her to the mansions of eternal peace.

On my brother's honor, on his promise to transfer to my Agnes the love, the tenderness he once bore his unhappy sister, I rest with unlimited confidence—yes *he* has said it—and *his* is the voice of undoubted truth—the peace of my last moments hang on his word.

Father Dominick, now at Bologne, will furnish you with proofs of every material circumstance contained in this long last letter; and oh Moncrass! *remember* it is not merely fortune my daughter claims from her uncle, however atrocious the spiritual guilt of her mother *she* is innocent, *she* is not the offspring of illegitimate passion,—the fame of her mother, with respect to her father, is as pure and as noble as the blood of Moncrass—take her then Reuben to thy heart; vindicate her right, support her honor, and clear the wounded fame of your dying sister.

Farewell my brother, farewell—the icy hand of death is on me;—I respire with extreme difficulty—even your image, and that of my angelic child lose their wonted power over my senses; they no more recall the flush of pleasure on my palled cheek—I hear you named by Victoire, without the throbbing tumult which used to fill my languid bosom—my eyes grow dim—they retreat from earth, they look inward unappalled at the awful, the tremendous change, which is even now begun.

Victoire I press thy trembling hand to my heart—I feel thy tears drop on my cheek—sweet earnest of our future greetings—peace, the peace of righteousness be on you all—my child—my brother—my friend—blessed forbodings! we part a few years, to meet in an endless eternity—where the wicked cease to trouble—and where the weary are at rest—once—oh once more—ye dear inmates of my soul farewell,

AGNES.

## LETTER LXII.

*Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.*

Belle-Vue.

WHAT a chequered scene, my dear madam, for the last few months, have the life of your Agnes presented.

I have been preserved, miraculously preserved, from a dreadful fate by Mr. Harley;—and it was from him I first learnt our mutual misfortunes, in the beatification of holy St. Clare.

Dear madam! respected lady abbess! I took my pen, I will console said I, my beloved monitress; I will promise to supply to her the place of the friend she has lost—but alas! I feel the presumption of the thought; I am in despair myself, and how can I hope, in any thing to equal St. Clare; permit me therefore madam, to ask from you the comfort I cannot impart.

St. Clare then was more than the friend of your Agnes—she was her Mother—Why my dearest madam? oh why! was the dear claim not revealed; till it was too late to pay her the humble, the tender duty, due to such a parent?—Have I only known a mother to lament her loss?—How often have I seen her eyes overflowing in tenderness, when she pressed me to her aching breast; how often have they been turned to heaven in speechless agony, after contemplating my features: the affection she excited in me, the respect, the reverence I felt for her, was the intuition of nature; my heart hung on her—and after every visit we paid her, the separation was that of soul and body.

Oh my mother!

How amiable were her precepts—how gentle her manners—how unassuming her virtue—how perfect her resignation—how edifying her piety—and, ah madam! Why must I add—how sincere her penitence?

Guard me, you who are the counter part of St. Clare, whose goodness, and whose virtue equal'd her's! oh guard me from the sin of reprobating my own father:—how will his guilty spirit meet his injured wife?—How will he shrink appall'd from the righteous eye of God?—Oh! may he receive the mercy he did not shew, and may the blessed spirit of my dear mother, hover over her orphan daughter—may she interpose between her Agnes, and the malediction denounced against the children of the unrighteous—join dear Lady Abbess with me in this prayer—I tremble least the [sins of] my father, should be visited on me; those sins of my mother are atoned—what agonies did they not inflict—Her delicate form was wasted, by the penances she continually imposed on herself: youth, beauty, health, rest, and peace; were all offered in expiation of her broken vow.

The good bishop you say at her last unreserved confession, gave her full absolution; and she died, with every assurance, that her punishment would *end here*.— Alas for pity.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes, it was her righteous prayer, that preserved me, in the midst of flames;—that sent Harley to my aid, when I was no longer sensible of the terrors which surrounded me.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I concluded my last letter I told you of the engagement I had made to exchange confidence, with the amiable girl they called Betsy.

Mr. Arnold had in his walk, picked up two of the neighbours, and a person from London; these he invited to supper with him, and his spirits were so exhilarated by the expected advancement of his daughter, that when we arose to retire after supper, they insisted on our staying; Betsy must sing, and Miss Arnold play on her spinnet.

Had her situation been less embarrassed she would certainly have spiritedly refused to comply with a request which was in effect a command: but tho' I was ignorant from what cause I knew her apprehensions were as lively as my own: and that Lord Morden, the man, whose visits to Greenwich, so much exhilarated the spirits of the Arnolds, was an object equally terrifying to her, as to me—her little heart struggled with pride, and to me, her eyes evidently display'd the conflict of her mind.

Miss Arnold was seated at her spinet, and the vulgar visitors were staring in admiration of her accomplishments; when Mr. Arnold again insisted, Betsy should accompany his daughter's music with her voice.

What shall I sing? asked she with a sullen, and (for the first time I had observed her spirits sink) a desponding air.—

Any thing—any thing—no matter what *you* sing, so as *my* Nancy can play it; answered the fond father.

She cast a glance at me—there was a mellow sweetness in her eyes that demanded compassion; mine were ready to overflow, but a sense of the importance it might be of to us both, to conceal our agitation restrained me: as she passed me to join Miss Arnold at the instrument, I softly reminded her of the promised interview; and then after the salutations of the night, lighted one of the candles, which were always placed on a side-table, after supper.

What be you going Miss Farquar? said Mrs. Arnold, winking significantly at her husband, dear me you are in a vastacious hurry—you be'nt merry at all to night.

She has no particular cause, said my little champion, turning round in the middle of her song.—

La, Betsy you have put me out, exclaimed Miss —

To be sure she has said Mr. Arnold, who having drank an unusual quantity of a liquor they called grog, was growing very authoritative, which he never was, but when he had drank a glass extraordinary of his favorite beverage; and for to tell you a piece of my mind Miss Farquar, I think you mought as well stay up a bit, as go to bed; what you be'nt like the dog in the manger be you?

I was all amazement! I could not understand what he alluded to in this rude speech, but I found it was amusing as it followed by a loud laugh, in which all but Betsy, and myself joined; I sought information from her expressive eyes, but *they* were cast down.

Irresolute, and trembling; after a moment's pause, (during which the loud laugh continued) I foolishly retreated to my chair, and Betsy leaving Miss Arnold at her spinet, resumed her seat.

I had now unwittingly been guilty of another offence.—

You mought as well put out the candle Miss Farquar, they be'nt so cheap, and I suppose you don't use such mould-candles in France. —

No no, said the men altogether joining in another laugh.

I arose in the greatest hurry to repair my error; but I was fated now, not only to endure mortification, but to deserve it.

After supper the large table at which we had sat, was removed; and a small round one substituted in its place, for the convenience of holding the bottles, glasses, and a large china bowl, in which they mixed their liquor, nearer the men; the bottles were of a monstrous size, and full; the drinkers were yet enjoying their laugh at my expence, when in the trepidation, and confusion occasioned by their brutal behaviour, my foot slipt, and I unfortunately overthrew the whole apparatus.—Some of the contents of the bottles fell on Mrs. Arnold, but more on the men; the carpet was deluged, and all the glass, and the bowl lay in fragments.

Poor Mrs. Arnold stood speechless and aghast; her husband, and his friends, looked at each other with astonishment; but their good humour prevailing, another loud fit of laughter, was followed by Mr. Arnold's ordering fresh bottles, and glasses: mean while his wife's face, which had at the moment of the accident turned very pale, was gradually changing to a sort of blue red.

Nancy Arnold is not naturally an ill-tempered young woman; she had been often witness, to the excesses, into which her mother's temper carried her; and seeing the storm gathering, which threatened to burst on my head, very kindly approached the place where I yet stood, with "a vacant eye" looking at the mischief I had done, and led me out of the room, before Mrs. Arnold recovered her speech.

Shut your door said she miss Farquar, and on no account be provoked to make mamma any answer; she will I am afraid be very outrageous.

I took her advice, and in a few minutes, had reason to congratulate myself on my escape; were I to describe to you madam, all the vulgar insults, the poor woman thought herself entitled to offer me; you would hardly believe, any thing in a female form, could so dishonor her sex: my person, my country, and the confusion of my mind, which occasioned the disaster were alike vilified; she came to my door, and demanded ten guineas, which she declared would not half pay her for the mischief, she *knew* I had *wilfully* done her—even Betsy, lost her influence on the occasion; neither hers, nor Miss Arnold's entreaties, for a long while had the least effect; and I was almost insensible with fear, when after terrible threats of what she would do to-morrow, she was prevailed on to quit my door.

I was my dear madam, you will believe, ill disposed for rest after this scene; nor did I dare to leave my apartment in search of Betsy, as we had preconcerted.

Mrs. Arnold's voice still re-sounded over the whole house, tho' she was I perceived in her daughter's apartment, at the other extremity of the building:

The men, whose noise encreased as mid-night advanced, were yet in the parlour, where we had left them; and were amusing themselves, with what they called singing.

The impressions of terror, and disgust, which the unmatronly Mrs. Arnold's behaviour, had left on my mind; the uncertainty of what the very morrow (on which she threatened to avenge the injury I was unable to atone, in the only way which could possibly mitigate her anger) might bring forth, from beings still more dreadful to *me* than even *her*; all conspired to distress me.

I thought of you, of St. Clare, they have abandoned me cried I, wringing my hands, tears streaming from my eyes; they desert their Agnes, and she is no longer the care of heaven—I am environed with dangers—there is no way to escape—I am lost even to hope—but what have I done? how have I deserved? and a proud sense of conscious innocence swelled my heart; my tears ceased to flow, an indignant apathy rendered me bold—

This woman cannot kill me said I—*she* dares not even offer me any violence—and the utmost malice of her words, will want the power to reach the soul of Agnes De-Courci—but that wicked lord, and his despicable adherents; alas (and again I wept) more

callous far in iniquity, than the unamiable Mrs. Arnold in temper; what will my innocence, my pride, the conscious rectitude of my heart, what will these avail if I am so unhappy as to be again in their power? oh let me die first? I will once more if possible escape from them, and if heaven do not bless my wish to return to France, I will implore the protection (alas of whom?) whom said I, starting with joy at the thought, which darted like a sun-beam on my mind, of the woman who injured me, who falsely accused me of having injured her; of Lady Mary Moncrass.

There was nothing so desperate madam, in this scheme; it even appeared so eligible to me, I wondered I had not before adopted it; my placing a confidence in her, thought I, will be attended with many obvious good effects, it will by clearing *my* honor, restore peace to *her* bosom, and reconcile her, to her husband.

It will be a safe, and honorable means, of returning me to my dear convent—

And, it will convince Harley—but what am I saying? said I self corrected—

In short, the more I pondered on this plan, the more pleased I was with it; I immediately sat to the escrutoire, and wrote a letter, which I determined openly to send her ladyship next morning: and also to acknowledge my name, and connection, by way of screening myself from any future insults from Mrs. Arnold, and to extort from her, the protection of her house, 'till my letter was answered.

It is inconceivable, my dear lady Abbess, with what confidence, and alacrity I addressed Lady Moncrass; no doubt of her goodness—no fear of her censure—impeded the joyful expedition in which I wrote—she is noble!—she is virtuous!—this I said to my heart, over, and over, as I folded the letter, which I laid ready addressed on the table; and after the storms of the day, dropt to sleep in my cloaths, with a composure, to which I had been long a stranger: while the hurricane still continued raging in the house.

I remember the clock went one, before I had finished my letter—my sleep was most probably the sounder, from the serenity of my mind; and I think it was about half past three, when I was awakened, by a want of breath and an effort to cough—I found myself almost in a state of suffocation, and heard a cracking noise, which was instantly succeeded by a light at my window, which I saw with affright came from the flames below stairs.

I ran, half senseless, to the door of my room; the stair-case had already taken fire, from the parlour below, where we had spent the preceding disastrous evening—I saw the danger I was in—the stairs only led to my room, and an adjoining one, which was the best chamber—I forced myself down through fire, and smoke, and happily gained the hall—I looked back madam—a moment later I must have perished—the room I left was already in flames.

The family were all alarmed, and running to, and fro' in the utmost consternation and affright—Mr. and Mrs. Arnold were shrieking for help, and calling for their children, who tho' they were clinging about them, they seemed not to recollect—the maids, and man were lamenting, and the latter ringing an alarm bell.

They saw not me nor had I power to speak.

As soon as Mrs. Arnold found her children were safe, she began to call as loud for help to preserve her property; and having then recovered a little, from the stupid terror, that had benumbed my faculties; I was preparing to offer my little assistance—when I thought of Betsy—my amiable friend—my little protectress.

I looked wildly round—I shrieked—ah she is not here—she is perishing—I gasped for breath—I might have died, nobody minded me.

I have before told you, Miss Arnold's apartments, as they were called, were in a new built wing at one end of the house, under which was the kitchen.

Where I slept was a correspondent one at the other, over the parlour—and to each of those wings there was a separate flight of stairs.

Miss Arnold was a treasure too precious to be trusted far from her father, she slept in a closet adjoining his chamber, but her cloaths, works, books, &c. were kept in the room allotted for her particular use, where also Betsy slept.

I looked with dreadful anxiety towards the stairs, they were yet standing. I then ran, or rather flew to the door, and rapp'd almost suffocated, again, with smoke.

She did not answer me.

I shrieked out, fire, fire, and again rapp'd,

I heard her then, running about the room, lamenting she could not find the door; and presently I found she had unbarred her window.

I turned my head, the flames were ascending, the stairs took fire, it was impossible for me to return.

The dreadful fate from which I had so recently escaped, and from which I was so anxious to save my friend, now seemed inevitable.

Fear, and desperation, gave me strength and courage; which I acknowledge to be the immediate mercy of God—I burst open the door.

I saw my friend, and was flying to her, but her words as she leaned out of the window, stopped and petrified me—I fell against the door, which closing with my weight, preserved the room a few moments longer.—

Mr. Harley, cried she, for God’s sake save me; save the life of Julia Neville.  
I in a moment saw him enter—Dear Julia!—sweet maid! How? but this is no time—let me preserve you while yet I can.

She threw her arms round him, while he bore her to a ladder he had placed against the house; and both vanished from my astonished sight.

I then ran with avidity to the window, my eyes followed them, he made his way through the croud, Julia yet in his arms; while I, the poor, forlorn, deserted Agnes, was left by *him*, by all the world; to worse than annihilation.

I now saw myself once more devoted to death:—but ah madam! in the one moment between me, and eternity—Harley occupied all my thoughts—he has left me to perish, said I, the fortunate Julia Neville engrosses all his tenderness—all his care.

I beheld the wild confusion before me with resignation, I asked not for help.

The family, and those who had come to their assistance, passed and repassed; the ladder on which Harley had both ascended, and preserved Julia Neville, was by accident thrown down; this occasion’d a little stop under the window, where I yet stood; but I had neither power, or wish to supplicate for assistance—Harley was gone—my eyes were achingly fixed on the spot where I last saw him—all nature died before me—I lost my senses, nor recovered, till I had been providentially saved by my better Angel! who at first, covered with smoke, and scorched by the fire, I did not know.

After this happy event, after what you know of Harley, and after my former voluntary confessions; say my beloved lady Abbess, will the sanction of your invaluable blessing, be added to that of my uncle? without it I never can accept Mr. Harley, and without him, why should I blush to acknowledge it, your Agnes cannot be happy: to you madam, my more than parent, I hold myself accountable for every act of my life: in you St. Clare yet lives, it is you who speak her sentiments, who breathe her piety, and who practice her virtues: withhold not then dear madam your unbiassed opinion, on this great event of my life. You know Mr. Harley, you have seen, how open his countenance, how mild his conversation, and how pleasing his address; but you are yet to learn, how equally he tempers gravity with gaiety, how devoted to rectitude, how judicious his sentiments, and how animated his friendship: happy is the being to whom he is a friend; “he loves them in prosperity—defends them in adversity—and laments them in death.”

Do not blame your Agnes, it is not the partial voice of passion only, which speaks in praise of Harley; the noble and unprejudiced Heart, of General Moncrass, is devoted to

his young friend; and the re-union of the worthiest pair in the world is protracted only 'till your consent arrives.

The dread always on the spirits of my beloved mother, lest she should be discovered to be the same Agnes who eloped from the convent at Lisbon; and for whose apprehension great rewards were offered, added to some other private reasons, induced the General to preserve inviolate from his dearest friends, every particular concerning my birth and affinity to him; and thence the mistaken, and scandalous report, which gave rise to the misunderstanding between my uncle and his Lady. A Major Melrose, one of the worthiest of men, tho' a free liver; has already waited on Lord Ruthven, Lady Mary's Father; we have not yet heard the final result, but Lord Ruthven fixes the criterion of his returning confidence in the General, to depend on my union with Harley.

Thus madam, the will of heaven appears to co-operate with the choice of your Agnes—but let me add, if that choice does not receive your full approbation, if the unbiassed sanction of my second mother, does not fully accord with the reasons I have adduced; then will I forego every pleasing hope *here*, for the equally pleasing one, of adding to the comforts of my early instructress, my constant friend; and throw myself into the bosom of your happy convent, in the firm confidence, that God will accept the vows of your

AGNES.

## LETTER LXIII.

*General to Lady Moncrass.*

Belle-View.

YOU have now my dearest Mary before you, the history of that unfortunate sister, for whom you have so often seen my tears to flow; poor Agnes! the same moment gave us birth, sorrow, and disappointment, followed us from the grave of our parents: many years our fates, were equally marked with distressful incidents, would to God the similarity had still continued; that I had seen my sister bending downwards in life, with the same peace, and tranquility, which lately has, and I trust yet will, be the happy lot of her brother: but she is no more, and I turn my beloved wife, from the urn of my departed sister, to the arms of the best of women, and of wives.

You see Mary, without disclosing the secret entrusted to me by a dying saint, I could not accede to your conditions: and how could I assume courage, had that not been the case, to tell you, that your Julia must be deprived of the rights of birth, and fortune, in favor of a niece of mine, the very person most obnoxious to you? my anxious eagerness to unite her to my son is now explained: I could not dare to violate a promise, extorted from me, by the grief, and injuries of an expiring sister; it was not only the bonds of fraternal love; it was the claims of justice, and humanity; yet how could I prevail on myself, to take any step in favor of my niece, that would fix dishonor on the daughter of my wife? sweet amiable Julia, why must the iniquities of thy father, be visited on thee? yet shall a stain rest on the house of Moncrass? shall a daughter of that noble race, live disgraced, and unacknowledged, while a male of our honored name exists?

Oh Mary, think of the conflicts I suffered between my love for you, and my desire to see justice done to the child of my injured sister; torn with agonizing regrets, abandoned by you, deprived of the dear society my soul panted after, the anguish of my mind, extending to my body, and utterly at a loss what step to take, in remedy of those complicated ills: I had even *now*, almost called you cruel, *now* when I am anticipating with transport, your return to my arms, never more to be separated.

*Your* Julia, *my* Julia, and her husband, are with me; she is no longer Julia Neville; she now honors the name of Moncrass; and on thursday next, Edward Harley espouses my niece; there will then, no longer be an Agnes Neville; perish the name, may it sink with the villainy of their father, into the gulph of eternal oblivion.

Permit me my love, to remind Lord Ruthven; who I flatter myself, will now think more favorably, of a man who ever honored, and esteemed *him*; of the disposition he made of his fortune, when you was given to the most worthless of men; his whole estate is I think bound to the child, or children you might bear to Neville: let me forebear to wound my adored wife, yet it is proper she should be apprised that her marriage not being

legal, her daughter cannot inherit under that settlement, nor in her unpleasant predicament, as heir at law to her own mother; the advanced age, and ill health of Lord Ruthven, renders this matter of immediate importance, as it may be necessary, in order to have the former settlement annulled; that the whole matter should go into the court of equity.

I have named thursday, for the nuptials of Harley and my niece; because I flatter myself, my beloved Mary, will immediately bless me with her presence; and should she be so disposed, there will be time for her to grace the ceremony; and, because we have not yet received the absolute consent of madam St. Lawrens, which we expect by express; Mrs. James Butler is here, her worthy husband will very soon join us; and I send an invitation this post, to our faithful Constance. You will be received as the angel of peace by your Moncrass, and hailed as the good genius of Belle-Vue, by all its inhabitants; Gallina petitioned to be the bearer of this letter, he has orders to wait your commands; I shall count the tedious hours, 'till I feel the genuine drops of sensibility, which I know will steal down my Mary's cheeks, when she is re-united to her fond adoring husband,

MONCRASS.

My Mary, when she says all she wishes for me to her venerable father; will be sure not to over rate the duty, and respect I feel for him; and should his Lordship, condescend personally to give his dear daughter to my arms, a second time; how willingly shall I submit to the procrastination of my own happiness, for the pleasure of adding so much to hers.

## LETTER LXIV.

*The Abbess St. Lawrens to Agnes.*

WHAT, oh thou ever endearing child of my heart, what can I answer, to thy solemn application? why dost thou call with such tender earnestness, on *me*, for *my* consent to an union, that will forever divide thee, from thy second mother? and why must the misgivings of my heart, be imputed even by myself, to a latent self love?—

Agnes my child! the child of my St. Clare! must I then part with thee? how can I give thee up for ever?—how forego the sweet solace of thy conversation?—shall I sanction an union that robs our community of so dear a member? that exposes a destined spouse of heaven, to the temptations of a vain world?

Oh tell me not of the merit, the worth, the graces of the insinuating Harley: the riches, the honor, and splendor that awaits thy union with him: I know them all—but Agnes, hast thou well considered it? this man may lead thee through life, he may strew thy path with rose leaves whose velvet down, may conceal the pointed thorn beneath; but again I say, hast thou considered? art thou aware that thou canst not enter the presence of our God with him?

Art thou sure my sweet girl! child of my heart! sister of my faith! art thou confident thy love for thy holy religion, *can* withstand the tempter, in a form so adored? Will he not pervert my child? shall I not eternally lose her?

Oh Agnes! born with all thy mother's softness, her beauty, and her native virtue; be not thou heir to her anguish: avoid the sin that will require such ample penitence to atone it: be not an apostate to the faith, in which thou wert born, in which thy whole race have died.—

What dost thou ask? my consent? to what—to thy happiness? is that the request of Agnes Neville to Victoire St. Lawrens?

Oh blessed virgin! witness how fully my agonized heart accords with all that can add to her temporal felicity.

Sanctity O God! to her, the sacrifice I offer of my own peace to hers—oh! may she be happy *here*, without risque to the long *hereafter*.

Take Harley, take to thine heart, the inestimable jewel on which all my fondness hangs; but, as thou wouldest escape the malediction of my holy community, as thou hopest for the prayers of the righteous, for the immaculate dew-drops of mercy, on thee, and on thy posterity, seek not to weaken the faith of my child—

Worship thou the blameless tenor of *her* life, and keep a strict watch over thine *own*—but presume not thou amiable heretic to place thy image between Agnes, and her crucifix—thy power, between my sister and her redeemer—

Trembling with fear, with regret, with fond maternal love, and convulsed with grief, do I resign her.

Alas! my tears blind me—

Yet once more—*once* did I say—oh never shall I cease to adjure thee my child—my beloved—my friend—to persevere in thy faith—that so my glad spirit, may greet thee, in those mansions where there are no marrying, nor giving in marriage—where St. Clare, and her Agnes may be again united to

VICTOIRE ST. LAWRENS.

## LETTER LXV.

*Edward Harley, Esq. to James Butler, Esq.*

Belle-Vue.

YOUR Caroline arrived here last night, in perfect health, and spirits; how rapid are the approaches to friendship in congenial beings, Agnes and my sister are already inseparable.

I wonder not Edward said Caroline, as we returned from a ride she invited me to take with her to the hermitage this morning, at your passion for Miss De Courci; she is more lovely than even you described her; I expected to see a beautiful finely accomplished woman, but Agnes is more; there is a certain graceful perfection in her form, and a sublimity in the contour of her countenance, which gives one an idea of something seraphic; a something one feels without the power to express it; then her voice, I never heard any thing so melodious, so meltingly soft, you must have been impenetrable not to have been captivated by her.

Ah James, how flattered was I by this eulogium on my charmer; how doubly so at my return, to hear *her* speak, not less partially of my sister.

What a lot is mine, oh! may no envious cloud arise to obscure the bright horizon of my felicity; spare her to me Oh merciful God! while *she* is mine I will bend in patient resignation to thy dispensations! however grievous, however afflicting, thy wisdom may decree them to be!—She passes my window, she smiles, her eye beams ineffable sweetness; Oh forbear! forbear! to such excess do I doat on thee, and such is thy power over my senses, that even thy smiles, dear object of my unalterable fondness, are productive of agony; yes they are pleasure, to extreme of pain; do you comprehend me Butler? no! for tho' you love you have not like me been hopeless; you cannot conceive the transition from deep despair, to joy, to rapture.

Thursday next; oh this painful sensibility! I tremble as I write, my heart bounds to my throat, I almost cease to respire.

Thursday next—how my soul anticipates the proud triumphing of that day—I shall look down on princes, I shall clasp my own Agnes, to my faithful bosom, it will be past the power of mortal efforts to tear her from me:—she will be *mine*—do you Butler feel like me, the force of that expression? *mine*—she, Agnes De Courci will be *mine*.—Oh that it were come! that it were past!

How hard to bear is excess of joy, mine is the more so, as while I tremble with extasy, my heart sinks in fearful apprehension, least some fatal accident should yet intervene, betwixt me, and heaven: I have run over in my mind every thing that can

possibly happen, to blast my fond aspiring hopes, and I see no one event, death only excepted, which can have that baneful effect; yet such is my agitation, so much does my soul hang on next thursday; that I shrink with terror, I am appalled at impossibilities.

But is it indeed possible? Oh Butler, where are now thy fatal prognostics, who now is injured by my inactive spirit? I grant that retirement is the nurse of sensibility: that passion has most power over a mind, not occupied by the care, and politics of the great world, and that I in particular, am vulnerable to the soft impressions, yet where is the evil? she whose grace, and figure, would adorn a court; whose sense, beauty, and accomplishments are seldom equalled and seldomer exceeded, she condescends to think like her Edward; she wanders with him through his favorite walks, listens with pleasure to the harmony of his natural aviary, sits with content by the side of his clear stream, and blesses his humble roof with her angelic smile; where then, is thy terror denouncing foresight? oh thou prophane augurer, come, be a convert, come see how lovely content can be.

The General has sent the credentials of his faith to Lady Mary, and we expect her ladyship will do honor to our nuptials; but greatly as I respect her, and much as I wish every event that will add to the happiness of General Moncrass, yet *my wishes, my hopes, my desires*; are all so entirely centered on one dear object, I fear no event that will not deprive me of her, I desire none in which she is not a principal.

You have heard of the generosity of Major Melrose, madame St. Lawren's answered his liberal application in my favor, with her full consent; my Agnes therefore gives her hand to the most grateful of lovers, with *her* approbation; her letter to Agnes on the occasion is charming.—Madam St. Lawrens is a bigot to her religion and fears for the faith of my beloved, she dreads my influence, but the soul of my Agnes is the temple of purity, sacred be the religious tenets of that heart where never an unhallowed idea entered. One whole delicious hour this morning, did my Agnes rest on my shoulder, while I held it for her perusal; and I kissed, unreprieved, the sweet stillicide off her glowing cheeks, at every sentence of tenderness, from her respectable friend. Again, and again, I exultingly exclaim what a lot is mine!

The hermitage is enlarging, under the inspection of the Major, who is so pleased with its present simple appearance; that he will not suffer the architect, who was sent for by the General on purpose to *beautify it*, (his own words) to move without him; we will make it as much larger, and more convenient as you please, or as you can Mr. architect he says, but as to its beauty what alteration you make, must be for the worse.

Julia is here as playful, and more happy than ever: she is now dressing my angel's hair, (you never Butler saw such hair) in a thousand fantastical forms, to make her, the wild thing says, as handsome as Miss Arnold; but, gaily correcting herself, as Mrs. Arnold said, I shall never be solid, or wise, else should I stand here, attempting an impossibility. Apropos of the Arnolds.

Lord Morden, whose designs on Miss De-Courci, carried him to Greenwich; never out of his way, discovering the mistake occasioned by his passionate entreaties, to be admitted to see her; and probably understanding from the present situation of the Ruthven, and Moncrass families, that they would not furnish him, with either wife, or mistress, had the address to turn his fine arts against the simple Nancy Arnold, and actually prevailed on her to elope with him: the scheme was however frustrated, by the sudden return of old Arnold, from one of his short voyages: who arrived at his own door in the instant the noble lord was handing his Nancy into a post-chaise: pushed Miss up the steps, and locked the door: my lord made unlimited use of his well hung tongue, he had a vast deal to say, to very little purpose; Arnold spoke not a word, but he made a very liberal use of his fists; in short, his lordship after being rescued by his servants, made a very precipitate retreat to town, carrying with him some marks of Mr. Arnold's resentment, which exposes him to the laugh of the great world.

Poor Arnold cried the generous Julia; what will become of him if the pride of his heart in his beautiful Nancy is lost? all that has happened to the nonsensical thing is owing to us; we should do something for the poor beauty, to put her in conceit with herself, and in good humour with the world;—a present from the General has accordingly been sent as an acknowledgment for the civilities shewn the ladies; and a promise of patronage should any of the family need it; a promise which from General Moncrass, is of great value to people who have sons to provide for in the world—nor Butler do not you suppose I have forgot the lad who assisted me in preserving my Agnes—*forgot him* what a thought was that.

*Tuesday,*

I deferred sending this letter yesterday, as Caroline thought you might possibly be with us, but yours which she has just received forbid, that hope—if it were in nature for me to be sensible of a want of any thing, when near my Agnes, it would be your company; but I will not profess, what I do not feel; I certainly wish, most sincerely wish you were here, but while blest with the endearing smiles of my Agnes, no vacuum can possibly subsist, in the soul of your

HARLEY.

## LETTER LXVI.

*Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.*

*Thursday,*

Belle-Vue.

I Retire from the society of my partial friends, from the fond attention of the most amiable of lovers, to address the dear protectress of my infancy, the beloved and respected guide of my early days, for the last time, before I vow to give that heart, to *man*, which notwithstanding my ardent affection for Harley, I often feel, whether from the early impressions of piety, the natural love I bear your dear sisterhood, or what other cause *I know not, but I do feel it should be devoted to God*. Your consent madam is arrived, but what a consent! it is not given, I see too plain, it comes not from your open heart, with that free grace which distinguishes all your voluntary actions: it is *wrested, extorted, I feel this*, and my heart wants the confidence its own approbation has hitherto insured—but I am overpowered, I only hinted a half formed wish to delay the solemn contract, I was instantly besieged with reproaches that spoke the kindest meaning, and with persuasion which had the power of compulsion; Harley did not speak—he could not—he sat in breathless agitation—while the gentle Caroline wept, and the lively Julia laughed me out of my own judgment; the General, and madam Vallmont looked seriously displeased; am *not I a good catholic* Agnes said the latter extending her hand;

I respectfully kissed it in token of assent.

I do not doubt *your* steadfast adherence to your religion.

I would not wed her to a prince, with whom I thought it would be endangered, said my uncle, his fine face glowing, and as we are entered on the topic, which tho' I was at first displeased, I begin to think not totally unnecessary, you and I Edward will talk it over; he then arose and Mr. Harley followed him to his library.

Father Dominick, was requested to attend.

They were a very short time absent.

My Harley, tho' steady in his own faith, warmly disclaimed every idea of warping mine; he engaged his honor unasked, never to enter on any conversation with me that should lead to religious discussions, and they returned to the drawing room.

My uncle entered with that fine open brow of pleasure which extends its influence to all around.

A charming english poet—Hayley, whose works I believe are not translated, had surely my dear uncle in his mind when he pourtrayed one who

“Nor moderations dupe nor sanctions brave,  
 “Nor guilts apologist nor flatterys slave,  
 “Wise but not cunning, temperate not cold,  
 “Servant of truth and in that service bold.”

Oh it is my uncle himself!

I am entering madam, on new duties, new cares, and situations, to which in your calm convent, I was a stranger: the world opens, with every flattering promise to my expectation.

Major Melrose could not be more warmly attached to my Harley, to the tender name of father, (a name alas! he any more than your Agnes never knew) was added to that of friend; he has already settled a fine estate on him, and solemnly declares him heir to all his fortune.

Mr. Montford a humorous old merchant, whose riches are immense; pleased at his alliance with a niece of General Moncrass, without being further informed of my story, re-adopts a partiality, which had begun to give way to disgust at the inactive turn of my Edward, and declares him joint heir, with his niece, to all his wealth.

My cruel father died in possession of every thing but honor, and happiness: unable from his constant disquietude of mind to enjoy the riches he possessed, detested by the woman for whom he abandoned my poor mother, and perpetually harrassed by the fear of a discovery, which would have freed Lady Mary from the misery, his tyrannic and unquiet spirit inflicted, he lived a narrow soul'd libertine, on a very small part of his income; regardless of the accumulations, increasing in the hands of his steward, which were found at his death to be immense, and are, the General says, my right.

Behold me therefore dear lady Abbess, on the point of entering the great world, in possession of full power to gratify every temporal wish: the man I adore doting on me, living but in my smiles, and ready to immolate his vital blood to insure my happiness.

My looks are watched, and my steps followed, for the kind purpose of anticipating my wishes, even before they are formed; yet my dear madam something still is wanting which neither the fondness of Harley, the kindness of friends, nor the far more impotent power of riches can supply.

Oh St. Clare! dear injured saint! thy image follows me in my walks, it is ever present in society, and my dreams are all full of thy sad story: I long to weep with her Victoire over the direful sin of her apostacy, her subsequent misery, and despair, and finally to rejoice with you, at her blessed penitence, and resignation:—how little

conscious was I when she received me, from your convent; that I was forever leaving our dear sisterhood, that I was to be taken from your protection never to return; and how much less did I suspect, the fondness of St. Clare, was indeed the tenderness of the best of mothers;—that I was daughter to the most cruel, the most obdurate of men; that I was the source of that continual anguish, which made such rapid devastations in the health of my beloved parent.

My heart which beat with a sensation altogether new and pleasing, as we approached the white cliffs of Dover; was at that time deserted by the soft, the sympathetic sensation, which has often, both before and since affected my whole frame; and which at this moment, I presume to say, beats in unison with the monotony of my youth; yes madam; the Major has informed you of the important change to-morrow will make in my fate, and you feel an excess of solicitude; you recollect a thousand instances of affection on your part, of melting tenderness on that of St. Clare, of juvenile fondness, and gratitude on mine; your feelings, have something in them at once too painful, and too pleasing for expression.

You tremble at the solemnity of an act which invests a stranger with all power over the child of your adoption; you feel the awful calm of the present moment, but altho' Providence and fortune, seems equally to smile on the future, you abandon the comforts of probability, and you feel all the horrors of the possible:—this then is sympathy, for such are the sensations of your Agnes.

Yet what have I to fear? father Dominick,—I am interrupted by a summons from my Edward the most tender, the most gentle; a fond meaning can put into words; pardon me madam, I leave you, to join him on the lawn, his eyes, swimming in fond expectation, are fixed on my window; dear amiable youth! why sinks the heart which is wholly thine, at the idea of to-morrow? Ah what would my sufferings be were I to be torn from thy arms? were any fatal accident *now* to divide me from my Harley?

\* \* \* \* \*

I am re-assured, I asked comfort and confidence of my Edward; his voice is the herald of peace, and his tears the sweet oblation which passionate sensibility extorts from the manly bosom: with a mind too elegant in itself to stoop to common forms, Mr. Harley is naturally polite; his deportment, and address, are too refined, and easy to be either the result of instruction or study: his is the grace of nature; his person, with no other ornament but a habit of excessive cleanliness, appears always adorned: it is but since he has loved your Agnes that his fine hair has been dressed, and it was so lovely in the garb of rusticity, that I could almost regret the necessity of complying in some degree with custom; not that he is less attractive from this alteration, for no outward mode can injure the form of Edward Harley.

My eyes when I joined him were swelled, my tears had dropped on the letter I was addressing to you. This amiable man Madame would sink under any calamity that befel

your Agnes. What excess of sorrow and apprehension took possession of his features; with what inexpressible tenderness did he chase from my bosom, the said train of ideas, which had taken possession there; dear comforter, he proposes a journey to the continent, as soon after our marriage, as our friends will spare us.

If you love your Edward, if the peace of his soul is dear to you said he, be chearful; thy whole life my Agnes, shall be guarded from disquiet; in the bosom of thy Harley.

*“If I love my Edward, if the peace of his soul is dear to me:”* Oh God! thou knowest how dearer than life he is to me, and I will be chearful: I will bless the dearest of men, his wishes shall be gratified, I will no longer suffer the sad retrospect of the past, or dread of the future, to dwell on my mind, and damp the transports of love, and generosity.

Father St. Dominick, I was going to inform you, consents to remove to Belle-Vue: General Moncrass has yet had no regular chaplain, and the good priest will divide his time betwixt our two families: ah madam! are you at a loss to account for my sinking spirits? my Edward is a heretic, avaunt, avaunt, ye sickening ideas, he is a christian, he is an honor to his maker.—

My poor mother had not heard I find, neither did the General inform her, of his alliance with Lady Mary; he generously concealed from *her* the circumstances which rendered her sad story of such importance to him, and his amiable wife; we expect her to-morrow, but should her ladyship not honor us with her presence, her absence will not protract the ceremony; adieu then, dearest madam adieu. For the honor of your protection, the blessing of your instruction, and the benefit of your example, suffer your grateful Agnes on her knees, to thank you; and oh! most honored madam, still continue to me your inestimable affection, still offer to the God you serve prayers for my spiritual, and temporal welfare; and still believe, in every change of time, and circumstance, in every wish, desire, and avocation of my mind; I shall, 'till called hence forever, be your unalterable

AGNES.

## LETTER LXVII.

*Mrs. James Butler to J. Butler, Esq.*

Belle-Vue.

It is one of the greatest mortifications I have yet known; that on this day of general jubilee when my heart is ready to burst its little prison, my dear James is prevented from participating in the joy of his fond Caroline; you bid me write but that was unnecessary, I cannot half enjoy my own happiness, till I impart it to you.

It is now just six o'clock, and even the lazy Julia's bell has rung; is it not pleasant to observe, how the celebration of a wedding enlivens the countenances of all the domestics in a family? they seem to feel their consequence augmented, by their share in the festival. I have amused myself this half hour, in fancying I could read the state of their hearts, as they pass with unusual alertness about the house; the men I conclude are all anticipating their own happiness, when their respective dulcinea's shall consent; and their circumstances will enable them to marry. The damsels I imagine who have not lovers, believe this day will give them one; and those who have, see their fate in that of the lovely Agnes. Of this same Agnes my dear James much, very much may be said, and yet leave the description of her beauty and accomplishments far behind: she is already dressed, a fine spotted book muslin coat and train over a white lustring, with a blowse cap of the same richly laced, fastened at the top with very valuable pearl pins, earrings, necklaces and bracelets to correspond, are the whole finery of her bridal dress; yet in this simple attire it is impossible to conceive any thing more elegant than her appearance. Edward's cloaths are embroidered in the highest taste, he means his dress as a compliment to the bride, and therefore it is as rich as possible, almost covered with spangles; Julia who has hitherto made no appearance, since her marriage, has her toilet spread with a profusion of Jewels, presents from the General, in such variety, she shall be, she says, at a loss where to place them all; her dress is a beautiful painted Italian crape. You have made me so fine by your last obliging present, that with the addition of my own, and my aunt Montford's jewels, I shall be a little queen of diamonds too; Mr. Moncrass in compliance with the taste of his wife, will also be richly dressed.

I have peep'd into the bride's dressing room; Edward was on his knees, in the act of worshipping his divinity, her sweet eyes bent on him with such a solemn affection, that I really felt as if I had interrupted devotion, and withdrew immediately: from thence I ran to Julia, who I found up to the ears in business and finery; every chair filled, and she in the midst of it, scolding her woman, for having literally but one pair of hands.

As Lady Mary is not come, the General looks very gloomy; we have not a soul but our own family; Father Dominick performs the ceremony, according to the Romish rites first in the saloon; then we proceed, the General, Edward, Agnes, and myself in the family coach, Mr. Moncrass and Julia in their new vis-à-vis, Major Melrose, Madam Vallmont,

the Rector and his lady in Edward's elegant post-coach: —The inns of four of the nearest villages, are ordered to be open for the entertainment of the populace; and the old, and infirm, served from thence at their own houses.

We have breakfasted, and expect the summons to the salloon every moment:—Edward trembles too much, dear fellow! he has hardly strength to support the bride.

\* \* \* \* \*

The popish ceremony as uncle Montford would call it is over—the carriages are drawing up. Adieu.

\* \* \* \* \*

Well James, joy, joy, to you, to myself, Edward is married: Mrs. Harley, sweet creature! threw herself into my arms; but it is impossible to say any more, we are all going to take parts in a little concert. Adieu.

CAROLINE BUTLER.

## LETTER LXVIII.

*Mrs. J. Butler to James Butler, Esq.*

Belle-Vue.

I am out of breath with terror, the last five hours my dear James have exhibited an awful instance of the incertitude of all human events; and proved, more than volumes of the best writing, the incapacity of weak mortals to judge, or to ask a boon of providence most necessary for their own happiness.

What piles of felicity in our little circle, were gilded by the beams of this morning's sun; what ruin, what devastations are witnessed by its departing rays—

You must come to us immediately, I foresee, with anguish, your presence will be necessary, on a business more urgent, and perhaps more dreadful, than that of supporting your poor Caroline.

Yet heaven knows she never wanted it so much.

I trust this will find you at L——, but if the assizes are closed there, the express will follow you.

Delay not a moment—

Isaac is an age getting ready, Oh God that my thoughts could but reach you.

Should Edward be come to you—but this is a surmise without hope—take him to London instead of returning with him here, as in that case I shall be collected enough to remain where I am, without you, as long as my presence may be necessary,

And

Should the above surmise be happily realised, the best thing that can be done for him, is to persuade him to go abroad.

He will explain this letter.

But if you do not meet him, come my beloved James to your fond Caroline, with the utmost speed.

I cannot get that methodical creature, Isaac to hurry, tho' he sees me trembling with impatience.

Yet I have neither spirit, nor composure to tell you our situation.

It is a detail no less prolix, than fatal; the sum indeed might appear in three dreadful words.

But James, tho' my heart is bursting, I cannot help fancying myself at this moment, a greater philosopher than yourself.

The shock it has given me, renders *me* fearful of suddenly alarming *you*—

Oh thank God Isaac is at last ready, come my dearest life and come safe to

Your

CAROLINE BUTLER.

## LETTER LXIX.

*Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.*

Belle-Vue.

DEAR blessed friend! of the miserable Agnes, how will your heart bleed, how are you doomed to suffer from your exalted friendship, your love for the wretched St. Clare, and her more wretched daughter! yet what have I said? *more* wretched! stop presumptuous pen, how dare I who can acquit myself to you, and to God? how dare I murmur?

Alas! alas! my heart is breaking, I know not to what excess despair may drive me, I need your protection, your consolation, I write to implore it, send I beseech you a lay sister, to fetch me hence; will they persuade, they will entreat, my uncle, dear worthy man, will command, the insinuating Caroline will weep, and Julia will not be denied; but ah! I cannot stay among them.

No Victoire! no! I have ventured on that tempestuous ocean, where the peace of my poor mother was wrecked: I stood on the brink of a gulph, which yet gapes for my destruction; I tremble at the precipice I have—but have I escaped? hide me madam, from the horror of my own ideas.

I was married to—heavenly father I can not say it—I dare not think it.

Dear ill-fated youth! unhappy! undone Harley! yes madam, tremble: raise your pure heart with mine, to that divine source, where for wise purposes inexplicable to weak mortals, this dreadful mystery was ordained; oh St. Clare! friend! saint! mother! could not all thy piety, thy prayers, and penitence; preserve thy poor orphan, from the horrid, the *unnatural* crime of wedding her own—

I cannot write it—he is gone, he is fled, he hides his anguish in impenetrable secrecy. Alas whither! whither! dear youth! art thou flown! why didst thou leave the warm heart that beat only to God and thee; our misfortunes are the visitation of the most high, we are miserable but we are guiltless.

His heart madam is the mansion of rectitude, he is appalled at the guilt into which we were plunging; and am I less affected? do I feel the mystic horror of our fate, less than him? No, but he has not like me, been taught to form a plan of temporal felicity, independent of the passions: he knows not, that even here, in this vale of misery, an unhappy mortal may find a sanctuary from grief, from despair; his religion leads not to such peaceful retreats, as our dear convent.

Oh Edward! why art thou gone? why hast thou left thy Agnes, thy friend? still now, and ever wilt thou be present to my thoughts.

Can I forget the anguish of that fatal moment, when, his frame convulsed, his eyes bursting from their orbit, and his faltering tongue unable to utter any other sound than, “miserable Harley!” “lost Agnes!” yet, overpowered by the sense of guilt, he had resolution to tear himself from his Agnes: yes Madame! my arms were innocently, tho’ vainly extended to detain him; I saw, tho’ ignorant of the cause, his inward conflicts; the iron hand of despair distorted that countenance, where a moment before, every manly grace were seen to shine with unspeakable lustre.

Oh to recal him, to comfort, to support his drooping soul; alas my Edward! and are we parted to meet no more?—shall I no more hear him speak? no more delight in the wisdom, and harmony of his accents? and can it be? Oh too sure, do I not even sin in wishing to behold him?

Oh my sad heart! were I with you, could I rest my aching head on your maternal bosom, yet, even there could I lose the memory of my misfortunes, ’till the unhappy fugitive is restored to his friends, to the consolation of innocence? No, no! *that* once effected, Edward once more restored to a laudable confidence in himself; how gladly shall I bid this tumultuous, this hateful world adieu.

Send for me dear Madam, let me return to your protection, oh that I never had left it! that my poor departed mother, had suffered me to offer my vows in expiation of her violated ones; oh! that it had been my happy fate, to have lived in ignorance, and died in peace.

I can no more, my head! my head! shall I die here? shall I expire among people, in a family who were blessed in the world, and in each other, before the miserable Agnes came among them? before the contagion of her misfortunes infected the house of tranquility? my pen drops from my fingers, my head, oh! how it throbs.

An amiable creature, the congenial spirit to poor Harley, promises to explain this incoherent letter—this must be the approach of death—every limb is in exquisite torture—dear tender Caroline I resign myself to you—my pen falls. Adieu adieu best——

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## LETTER LXX.

*Mrs. Butler to Madame St. Lawrens.*

Belle-Vue.

Dreadful Madam, dreadful to me is the explanation I have promised.

To retrace the scenes which have passed, and which still hang in dark suspense over us, is a task really terrible; and it is rendered still more so, by the dangerous situation of our dear Agnes; the agitation of her mind has thrown her into a high fever, but she is yet sensible; and implores me, with such extreme, such pathetic earnestness, to give you the particular of a story, which nearly destroyed us all, I cannot resist her affecting importunity; tho' I am extremely indisposed, and very ill able to support myself under the grief, and suspense which I feel at Harley's absence; but the supplicating looks of the dear Agnes are not to be resisted.

You are informed Madam, the nuptials were to take place Thursday, and that we were in hourly expectation of Lady Mary's arrival.

The General's anxiety during the separation from his Lady, had materially affected his health; and the gout, which had only once before attacked him, was removed with difficulty from his stomach into the extreme parts; it was now fixed on his right foot, which with the weakness a course of medicine had left on his constitution, rendered it improper, if not dangerous for him to take so long a journey, as from Belle-Vue to Bath; or it is most probable he would not have waited Lady Mary's arrival here.

After the ceremony, oh madam! what a ceremony, never shall I forget it, nor will I ever be present at another.

The glow of modesty crimsoned over the cheek of the charming Agnes, but her mind, above the common forms, which influence some brides I have seen of less understanding, conscious of no latent reason to be ashamed of the vow she was taking, communicated its dignity to her countenance; her bright eyes met those of the transported Harley, as with a fine mellow low voice, but perfectly distinct, she pronounced the solemn, "I Agnes, take thee, Edward," and with equal presence of mind, she went through all her part of the awful contract.

To describe Edward must be to have seen him, oh my poor! poor brother!

After the ceremony we met in the saloon: the General plays capitally on the violoncello, and I need not say to *you* that Agnes on the harp is harmony itself; I sat to the organ, Edward took his flute, we were all musical—even Madame Vallmont and father

Dominick bore a part in one of Bach's fine compositions—The door flew open—and my mother rush'd in, all pale and trembling—followed by my uncle Montford.

We expected Mrs. Butler would have accompanied Lady Mary, her terrific countenance, and agitation, therefore alarmed us on her account.

How is my wife, where is Lady Mary, dear Constance say but is she well? cried the General, and we all crowded round her.

She threw herself on a chair, and asked faintly for a glass of water; before it could be got, tears seemed to relieve her, but she was some time incapable of speaking.

The General's gout was no more remembered, he stamped in agony; Speak, Constance, for God's sake relieve me from this dreadful suspense; where is my Mary my wife?

Mrs. Butler, as soon as she could speak, begged the General would not alarm himself; his Lady was not ill, not dangerously ill, she was as well as—as —

As what madam, speak I conjure you, as what? interrupted the General, trembling, and in the same instant ringing the bell —

Dear General do not thus alarm yourself; Lady Mary's greatest malady *now*, is her concern for you, yet she is indisposed.

A servant appeared, the horses were ordered to be put to the travelling chaise; for *me*, said the General, is she distressed for *me*? let me fly to her.

Mr. Montford had in the mean time walked with Harley across the saloon; a scream from Agnes called my attention from Mrs. Butler, to her, where I saw—

Good God! how shall I describe the anguish of that moment.

My uncle had an open letter in his left hand, the fore finger of his right was in the act of pointing out to Harley the contents of what was written on the paper, but Edward had already heard enough; he stood, his eyes cast upwards with such horrid earnestness, the whites only were visible; his features were distorted with inward convulsion; drops of sweat rolled down his forehead, his brows were contracted, his hands clasped together, and never was there seen, so striking an emblem, of hopeless distraction.

Poor Agnes! whose attention was first excited with ours about Mrs. Butler, had it soon mournfully engaged by a more interesting object; she marked the changes in his countenance, 'till his senses appear'd to forsake him, it was then she shrieked, and ran to clasp her arms around the lost Edward.

In vain for some time, were all her efforts to rouse him from this distressing torpidity of soul; she called on him by the tenderest appellations, her own Edward, her dearest Harley, her husband.

At that he started, tears gush'd from his eyes, and oh! what groans, what direful groans rent his bosom; Miserable undone Edward! cried he, again straining his eyes upwards, then suddenly fixing them on her, lost, lost Agnes!

Edward—dear Edward what means my more than life? Oh whence this horrid distraction? and again she was throwing her arms around him.—

With a look, heavenly God! what a look—he disengaged himself from her fond grasp, and twisting his hands in his fine hair, which he pulled out by the roots, and scattered as he went, ran out of the house with such celerity, and we were all so stupified, so afraid of enquiring, yet so eager to know what had caused such a sudden revolution, from the excess of happiness, to the extreme of misery, that he was not followed, 'till he was out of sight and no one could tell the path he had taken.—

The Major and the Rector went immediately to the Hermitage, he had not been seen there, nor have we since heard of him; but to return to the dreadful exposition.

Agnes threw herself into my arms, and wildly demanded why her Harley had left her? where he was gone? and what was the cause of this tempest in a mind, which was wont to be hush'd into infant mildness at the voice of his Agnes?

Too, too soon, were her enquiries answered.—

Ah madam! you who are a saint on earth, whose soul already participates in the serene joys of the blessed, even *you* could not have borne this scene, without lamenting that two of the most lovely, and most deserving of God's creatures, should be thus rendered the most unhappy.

You have heard from Major Melrose, in his application for your sanction, to the marriage of Edward Harley, to Miss De Courci, all that we knew of that young man's history—My aunt Montford bred him as her own son, and my mother who had married imprudently, dying when I was in my infancy, she had also the goodness to adopt me: we were thus brought up together, and the fraternal love he ever evinced for me, was returned by the warmest sisterly attachment.

During the life of Mr. Neville, the acquaintance which had subsisted between my aunt's family, and that at Belle-Vue, was entirely dropped: it was very seldom that charming seat was visited by Mr. Neville, and when it did happen, Mrs. Montford did not chuse to give him the trouble of refusing to let Lady Mary be seen by her, it being his invariable custom to deny his Lady to all her old friends.

On Mr. Neville's death however, my aunt was amongst the first who paid her respects to the noble widow; and then presented to her young Harley—who, from that period became a great favorite with her ladyship.

Mr. Neville madam, I need not inform you, was a man of dissolute manners—He had early in life seduced a young ward of his father's—Miss Woodburne—whose brother fell in his attempt to punish the destroyer of his sister's honor.

The poor girl lost her reason when the tidings of his death, and Neville's flight was told her, *she* left her guardian's house, and became an insane wanderer; in that situation—but I cannot go on—I must get Mr. Dominick to transcribe Mrs. Montford's letter to Lady Mary, which she wrote during her last illness; I will then if I am able, resume my pen, at present I can only entreat you will pray for Agnes, for Harley, for the distressed friend and sister of both,

CAROLINE BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXI.

*Mrs. Ann Montford to Lady Mary Moncrass.*

(Inclosed in the preceding letter, copied  
by father Dominick.)

Hermitage.

My dear Lady Mary,

THE cancer which has so many years afflicted me, is no longer to be parried by the art of medicine, I always knew it would be my end; the formidable advances it now makes on my constitution, and the impossibility of repelling it, are omens of a speedy dissolution, I cannot misinterpret—my worldly affairs are all arranged, except the secret you have so often solicited me to reveal respecting my dear Edward: I told you it should not die with me; no Lady Mary, I am too much interested in his future welfare, to conceal from you a story that will make you his friend, when I am no more—you will have an old maid's confession—but no matter—you may arraign her folly but you will acquit her of guilt.

How has it escaped your observation Lady Mary, that my Edward is the image of your late husband? Of the only man I ever loved.

When Mr. Neville was first your mother's favorite at Belle-Vue, my heart was enslaved by his exterior perfections, I loved him from a youth, and through all the changes of his variable fortune; how he, whose vanity was so great, came not to take advantage of my partiality, is not so easily understood, but I believe he never suspected it; as the little civilities he paid me were free from design, he was not at the trouble to conceal any of his sentiments; his mind I remember I used to think was undressed when he conversed with me, but it was like the dishabille of a beautiful woman, when unadorned, most attractive; I excused his vices when they would admit it, and I studied his follies, till they became as natural to me as my own.

But when Miss Woodburne's affair came out, that was too gross even for me to pardon; and the conviction of his abandoned principles, affected my spirits so much, I was glad to accept my brother's invitation to visit his Somersetshire estates, in hopes I should get rid, by change of scene, of the melancholy I was falling into.

My brother was always partial to me, he rode, walked, and indeed devoted his whole time to my amusement.

We were one evening, strolling down a meadow, by the side of a river near his house, when we saw a young woman plunge into the stream from the opposite side; my brother ran immediately to her assistance, nor was I far behind him. The river, fortunately

as the weather had long been dry, was shallow; and my cries which were heard by the domestics, hastened them to us; they assisted in getting the body to my brother's house, where, notwithstanding the first medical skill we could procure, it was four hours before she was pronounced out of danger.

My brother was struck with her beauty, but the melancholy in which she was totally absorbed: was an attraction to me far more potent, he *saw* she was handsome but I *felt* she was unhappy.

Instead of thanking, she reproached us for preserving her; yet we persevered in our kindness, we saw she was well bred, and could not doubt but her origin was respectable, although we had likewise every reason to suppose she had been imprudent, as she was very visibly pregnant.

Her intellects were touch'd, she would often rave, and oftener keep a profound silence—but she had intervals which exhibited a most amiable mind; she was naturally tender, and grateful, and her acknowledgments for our kind *intentions*, a distinction she would always make, increased the affection we felt for her.

Quiet, and attention, by degrees, restored her to her reason; she then acquainted us, she was the ruined Miss Woodburne, of whom we had heard too much.

Poor meek creature, she could not support herself under the accumulated weight of guilt, and sorrow, when her brother's death was added to her own ruin, her agonies were too acute for her intellectual faculties; she flew from her guardian—your uncle Neville, and had been wandering about the country, avoiding the high-roads, and hiding from the sight of her fellow creatures, who she fancied were in pursuit of her, as the murderess of her brother, till the moment in which prompted by fear, and despair, she had sought to end her wretched being: she concluded her affecting story, with entreaties that we would not discover her to her guardian, but suffer her to breathe her last with us; and not abandon her guiltless infant, when it became an inhabitant of the earth.

We engaged to fulfil all her behests, and endeavour'd to banish the despair which had taken possession of her, but without success; she lived only to bring her child into the world.

My partiality for Mr. Neville has never been, notwithstanding his libertine character, wholly eradicated; with *his* graceful form and insinuating manners on my mind, it is little wonder my heart continued inaccessible to any other of his sex: and so, I am an old maid.

Again I cannot help asking, how it could escape your observation? For never were there two created beings, that more resembled each other, than Mr. Neville and my Edward; he has the fine figure, and understanding of his father, without his vices; and I actually am cherishing my first passion for Neville, while I indulge my fondness for

Edward; a confession, that may perhaps, and that in no small degree, lessen the opinion your Ladyship have been pleased to entertain of the urbanity of those motives, by which you supposed me to be actuated, in my conduct towards him.

Without knowing the claims he *should* have on Mr. Neville's fortune, you have promised Lady Mary to patronize my boy, when Ann Montford is no more: and the reliance I have on your word, is a comfort I would not part with on any terms; you will not I am sure, for *I know you*, be less his friend, for the discovery I have made of his mother's misfortune and of his father's depravity—

I attended, at her dying request, her remains to Gloucestershire, and saw her corpse laid at the feet of her father.

Her fortune, and her brother's estate, to which she was heir, were very considerable; but, as she was under age, it was not in her power to settle any part of either on her son, neither could he, who was illegitimate, inherit it; *he* therefore, could derive no advantage from a discovery of his mother's shame; and to own the truth, I did not wish to divide my right to the young orphan, with any other person; I therefore left the village church, without answering a single question concerning the deceased, and returned to the Hermitage with my dear charge.

You know Lady Mary how abundantly I think myself overpaid, for my care of this boy; by the gratitude, and affection he bears me, and how I exult in his personal, as well as mental graces.

I divide my little fortune between him, and Caroline Brookes, only child of an unfortunate sister who married a man totally unworthy of her; but he also is dead, I will not therefore say more on that head, than that my brother, as partial to Edward as myself, engages to dispose of his large fortune in the same manner I have left my small one.

The mind of Edward Harley has been formed, and his talents cultivated under my inspection; you knew his tutor the excellent Doctor Allen.

I am perfectly satisfied with his disposition myself; but ah! Lady Mary, while gratifying my own peculiar turn in the embellishment of his mind, I forgot perhaps he must be like other men; he is now only virtuous, honest, and honorable, "I took that season of life when the soul as yet unhacknied in the ways of men, is susceptible of every fine impression, when the sublime and beautiful of virtue, inflame it with a laudable enthusiasm, and worldly passions had not yet entangled it in their snares," to model his inclination and lead his taste.

But in a world, where the innocence of the dove, should be entwined with the guile of the serpent, with that warmth of feeling, that exquisite sensibility, what will become of him.

Take him Lady Mary I beseech you under your protection; without, if possible to avoid it, disclosing to him his disgraceful birth, which his poor mother beg'd he might never know.

Should I not again have the happiness to see you Lady Mary, suffer my extreme illness to be an apology for this trouble—my surgeon talks of the knife, but I will not submit to the operation, and my complaint is mortal.

Yet I trust I shall again see the dear friend I now with reluctance part with.

May your comforts dear Lady Mary, increase with your years; may your faultless example, excite in your lovely Julia, a desire to emulate, she never can excel her valuable mother.

May the worthy General continue to deserve you—human perfection can go no farther.

While the venerable Earl is spared to the most affectionate of daughters, may he be blessed with health, and spirits, and when it shall please the Almighty to call him hence, may you Lady Mary, bear the short separation, with the fortitude and resignation, which has hitherto rendered your character, a model of female perfection.

Adieu Madam, once more let me recommend my Edward to your patronage, and I know you will sometimes condescend to enquire after my pretty Caroline—but *she* has relations—Edward none—you will also, sometimes remember

ANN MONTFORD.

## LETTER LXXII.

*Mrs. Butler to Madame St. Lawrens.*

In continuation.

THUS then madam, you perceive, how from a combination of events, and from a concealment which no human policy could predict would end thus miserably, Edward and Agnes are undone.

The tenderness which reciprocally attached the wretched pair to each other would, had they known their consanguinity have stopped at the fraternal bond; but, mutually amiable—charming in their persons—elegant—delicate—and brilliant in their understandings; the first favorable impression increased by degrees, 'till it ended in a passion too potent to be subdued by reason, lessened by time, or transfered to any other object.

In Harley it had indeed taken early and deep root, it was a part of himself, and what may be the consequence of the discovery to him, I tremble to think.

My greatest fear for Agnes, arises from the delicacy of her constitution.

Her love for Edward would I am convinced have stood the test of time, or any change of circumstances; but should her invaluable life be spared from the ravages of the fever, I think we may hope, that her mind untainted with guilt, and unappalled with inward reproaches, will in time, recover the shock it has received.

Her innate principles, look not to externals, her God, and her conscience are the umpire of her actions, to them she makes her appeal, and she will consider the discovery, late as it was made, as the peculiar intervention of Heaven, to preserve her from an union so retrograde to humanity.

She will not I venture to predict, admit another inmate to her bosom; her plan of passing through life was made, and all her ideas of happiness formed, before she left your convent.

Her love for Harley, while it engrossed her passions, could not wholly reconcile her to the world; tho' courted to its enjoyments by the object of her fond affections, who also doated on her.

She is now she says convinced of the wisdom of her first plan, and deplors that she ever abandoned it, for one so illusory.

She will not be prevailed on to stay amongst us; no madam! you will again receive your Agnes, she will be your's forever; and we shall recollect her as a heavenly vision which just passed our sight and vanished.

She will indeed leave an impression, no time can erase; but she will be lost to us, we shall see her no more; she is at this instant earnestly praying that she may be spared to return to your convent, to die at your feet.

The good Priest prays by, and comforts her—but what is become of him she cries? Oh where is my Edward? She is incessantly enquiring if I, if the Major, or any body has heard of him? If we can form no conception where he is gone?—Would to God! we could.

Three days ago Belle-Vue was a scene of joy and festivity, it is now frightful, and gloomy as a desert.

When Lady Mary came to the part of St. Clare's history, which discovers Neville to be her husband and the father of Agnes; the idea of the unnatural marriage which it might be perhaps too late to prevent, struck her so forcibly she fell into hysteric fits which continued 'till after my mother joined her at Bath, with intention to accompany her hither.

Mrs. Butler was informed by her woman of the paquet Lady Mary had received, for she was unable to speak herself, but altho' she could presume so much on the friendship subsisting between them, as to read the contents, and altho' she was herself extremely shock'd at the baseness of Neville, and affected by the misfortunes of St. Clare, she owned she was surprized it should have so great an effect on Lady Mary.

But when that lady sufficiently recovered, to be able to reveal the real source of her grief, there required little persuasion to prevail on Mrs. Butler, who is one of the most humane creatures breathing, to set off express to Belle-Vue and break the matter to the General. Mr. Montford was at his seat in Somersetshire, and as the road to Belle-Vue passed it, Lady Mary in a short note requested he would accompany her.

My dear mother, ever active in the cause of benevolence, tho' long an invalid, forgot all her own complaints, and travelled two hundred and fifty miles across the country, without stopping longer than to change horses, in hopes to be in time to prevent the marriage. She left her Ladyship confined to her bed, which when the General understood, he set off to Bath with Julia, leaving his son to escort Mrs. Butler; who was too much concerned for her friend to stay from her, while she was in such a situation; tho' she, was unable to travel back with the same expedition she had come to Belle-Vue.

All that the most tender parent could say, in alleviation of the misfortunes of this unhappy brother, and sister, and in solemn promise of unceasing paternal fondness, and protection did General Moncrass say to his lovely niece; who urged his hasty departure to his wife, and implored him to prevail on Lady Mary to believe, she lamented the

incessant trouble, she was the innocent cause of to her—Sweet creature! she endeavoured to conceal the anguish of her heart, from her uncle, and promised him, she would make herself as easy as the nature of her situation would admit.

Mrs. Moncrass was visibly divided between duty to the best of mothers, and compassion for her distressed friend; the former however, as it was fit, prevailed.

Mr. Moncrass, and Mrs. Butler followed the General and Julia early the next morning; they all earnestly recommended the unfortunate bride, to the peculiar care of Mrs. Vallmont and myself.

Major Melrose who loves Edward as his son, is continually on horse-back in search of him—but, if he yet lives—ah me! what a surmize was that—He has probably left England.

I have wrote to Mr. Butler, who I know will leave every other business, the moment he receives my letter, and come to join his endeavours with the Major to trace the poor fugitive; I know *his* influence over the mind of Harley, is greater than that of any other person; perhaps I might add too, with all respect to the Major, who is an excellent character, his feelings would be more congenial to the anguish of the dear Edward; could we but find him.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Saturday evening.*

Agnes continues so ill that I want heart to send away this letter; and oh! my own sad forebodings; hitherto a stranger to any distress, absent from my beloved husband and thus robbed of the dear companion of my infancy, how unfit am I to be the scribe on such an occasion.

*Monday.*

Nothing but sorrow Agnes lives, but that is all; Lady Mary's life is, we hear in danger from a billious attack, the General relapsed, and Mrs. Butler in the utmost distress—she doats on Lady Mary.

*Tuesday.*

My Butler is thank God arrived, safe, and well, some comfort in that; dear generous creature! he is in agonies for Harley.

*Wednesday.*

I congratulate you, and rejoice myself, our Agnes is better; the crisis of her fever was favorable.

Her physicians order her to be kept very quiet; and flatter us, if she does not relapse, the worst is now past; I do not suffer a breath to be heard, no not my sighs for Edward,—unhappy Edward!

Mr. Butler is gone to the Hermitage, tho' hopeless of success, to renew the enquiries already made in that neighbourhood, after our dear wanderer; he has he says, sometimes a latent hope he is gone abroad; yet he trembles at his name, his fears are grounded on a thorough knowledge of his friend, those fears, oh madam! they want a name.

*Thursday.*

Mrs. Butler writes by desire of the General and Lady Mary, to request all possible care may be taken of Agnes; that she may be considered as the heiress of Mr. Neville, addressed by his name, and in every respect treated as the General's nearest relation.

But what are appellations, or form, to such a mind as her's? Who that knows her will suppose she would at such a time as this, be interested about mere hereditary possessions? No madam—*your* Agnes, *my* Agnes cannot now receive a consolation, in which the mind does not share.

Ah Caroline! said she just now, when I read to her Mrs. Butler's letter; tell me that Edward is found, that he lives, and resigns himself to the will of his Maker; that his heart is purified from an incestuous passion, that he acknowledges his sister, his unfortunate sister, joint heir with him to the direful consequence of the crimes of their unnatural father—and I will hail thee as the patriarch of old did the returning dove; thy voice will be music to the sad soul, where fear and desolation dwells; but, 'till I know *his* fate, 'till I am sure *he* exists, 'till I am certain he is restored to peace; what are names, but sounds in which I delight not? what are riches but trash I cannot enjoy? And what are temporal honors but snares to a mind unfortified by religion? Edward continued she, clasping her uplifted hands, return, return to thy friends, thy home, let me see thee happy, and then with what joy shall I resign in thy favor, all my right to the wealth of him who destroyed *thy* mother, and murdered *mine*—My home is at the convent D——, the relatives of my heart live there, in the practice of piety in the service of the blessed Virgin; *there* I should be welcomed with transport, were I to return to them, stript of every earthly good, but my honor—Blessed sanctuary for the broken-spirited—holy asylum for the offspring of iniquity—how do I long once more to join our heavenly choir.—

This woman, this Agnes is already soaring above mortality; when I hear her melodious voice uttering religious rhapsodies, I feel a kind of solemn awe I cannot describe; a respect, a veneration.

But *true religion*, respected lady Abbess however different in outward professions, and in form of worship, is I believe one invariable impulse, over the whole face of the creation; how indeed should it fail to be so? since the source from whence it arises is the same, the beneficence of the Father of the universe, is equally extended to all the inhabitants of the earth, it is a thankful sense of *his* unceasing goodness, *his* inexhaustible mercy, and *our own* unworthiness, that lays the foundation of all religious sentiments.

The Indian, whose mind cannot boast that expansion, we of the enlightened world receive from the holy scripture, instruction, and example; pays *his* adoration to the glorious sun, he hails the returning light with thankful rapture; and his soul prostrates itself in love and gratitude at the shrine from whose genial warmth, he supposes every good proceeds; this then in *him* is *true religion*.

We *know*, we *feel*, we owe all our earthly blessings to a superior Power; and the greatness, the sublimity, the glory, the mercy of that Being, who from such an immensity of distance, such superiority of wisdom, condescends to pay attention to the wants of the meanest reptile that creeps on the earth; must fill us with a stronger sense of true religion, in proportion to the larger share of reason with which he has been pleased to endow us.

So that, madam; it is no small happiness to me, to be assured from my own feelings that *you* in your cloister, our dear *Agnes* and *myself*; have all the same sense of the divine goodness, are animated by the same thankful piety, and shall all be ultimately received into the celestial joy of the same God.—

Pardon madam, this unsolicited confession of faith, it is extorted by my love for *Agnes*, and my desire to be mentally admitted to the friendship of madam St. Lawrens.

*Agnes*, or as the General commands, Miss Neville, being now, God be praised better, and continuing to recover, I congratulate her friends at the convent of D——, on the happy turn her fever has taken, and beg leave to subscribe myself

Madam,

Your respectfully obliged,

Humble servant,

C. BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXIII.

*Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens.*

Belle-Vue.

ONCE more madam, the child of sorrow addresses her best friend; her view of an eternity that had no horrors in it to her, but which seemed on the contrary to invite her sad spirit to rest, closes; and she returns, reluctant, and hopeless, to the temporal concerns, which must be arranged, before she finally leaves a world where her peace has been sacrificed to transient good and permanent evil.

I am yet weak, I dare not look back—the retrospect would incapacitate me for the task, which justice, and duty demands.

To ask your opinion, and wait its arrival would detain me here too long; it would not only rob me of many hours of rest in your arms, but inflict an equal degree of heightened sorrow, by prolonging my stay in a family, whose tranquility will be restored, when I have forever left it.

I have sent for an english attorney, madame Vallmont is his ostensible employer: any visible preparations for my departure from hence would afflict the generous friends, whose kindness encreases with my sorrows; Mr. Butler eloquently persuades, and his amiable wife weeps as she folds me to her bosom; they soothe, they entreat, my uncle, dear worthy man! already lays plans for my future greatness, and his noble wife prides herself on the restitution of all my fathers fortune, generous woman!

My intention is to make a legal renunciation of the riches which has been fatal to me, and which I never can want. Were there no other claimant; were not the rights of my sister, of the sweet Julia! incontestible, altho' our father's depravity would perhaps deprive her of a legal title—I might reserve some part of his immense wealth, for charitable uses; I might devote it to the pious purpose of having mass continually offered for his soul; but God will, I humbly trust preserve *me* from the mistake, I have so often heard *you* condemn: the Judge of the universe, the Fountain of mercy, will not accept the produce of injustice, or the gleanings of avarice, however charitably or piously bestowed, in expiation of mortal sin; no! the offerings acceptable to the Saviour of man, are those which come from the purified heart—yes the heart which has itself, done justice, and loved mercy; may approach the altar of God, with sacrifice, and such only will be accepted.—

In the conviction then Madam, that it is simply an act of common justice, I am anxious to secure to Julia, the fortune to which she is before Heaven, undoubted heir *after* me—after me did I say—oh! that I had ever remained in ignorance of my care-crowned

rights, that I had existed only for the service of my Maker, the fond solicitude of dear St. Clare for my temporal welfare, has been the bane of my happiness.

Ah Madam! do you not tremble at the abyss of anguish into which I was on the point of plunging? The marriage vows had passed my lips, nature groans at the recollection; father Dominick declares me absolved from the sin I unknowingly committed, but my wounded spirit still dwells on the enormity of those evils, which but for the interposing mercy of Providence might have marked that fatal vow with unutterable horror.

Merciful God! I thank thee, I will devote the remainder of my days to thy praise—One, one only prayer have I to offer to thee, I prostrate myself before thee, I cry to thee in the anguish of my soul, oh spare, protect, restore the unhappy, the innocent partner of my guilt; give me to know he yet lives, blast not his youth with the agonies of despair—save him from the temptations of hopeless sorrow—Oh! be his safeguard against himself—suffer not the brightest of thy works to a fall a sacrifice to sin.

My eyes flow with tears they drop on my paper, you perceive the traces, my sight is dim'd, oh whither has his perturbed spirit borne the dear, the amiable Edward? Mr. Butler, his bosom, his confidential friend, a young man who honors his own heart by his anxiety for Harley, trembles for him; he is perpetually seeking, yet dreading to find him; pale fear sits on his cheek at every sound of the gate bell, he wants the resolution to ask the business of any stranger that arrives; and his amiable wife, who is tenderness and delicacy itself nurtured by the same breast, fed by the same hand, and early taught the same principles as my unfortunate brother, is actually the philosopher from whom we all learn fortitude.

Madame de Vallmont harassed by our perpetual uneasiness, sick of this world, and aspiring to a future, resolves to be my companion to D——; if therefore you have not already sent the lay-sister, there will be no occasion; Madame de Vallmont is a woman of honor, great knowledge of the world, and used to travel; I shall be safe in her protection, and benefited by her society.

\* \* \* \* \*

The attorney has been here and I have legally renounced all claims on the fortune of my unhappy father in favor of Julia.

This is a step my dear Lady Abbess, you will not perhaps at first approve; because I know it is your wish to have the fame of my dear mother vindicated, by the public justice done her daughter.

There appears I confess to have been a time when that motive had great weight with *her*: but dear Madam, the only real disgrace on *her* character, was that of having broken her first vows to Heaven; every calamity which succeeded *that sinful act*, were the

natural consequences of it: and you see that a publick avowal and proof of her marriage, serves only to render the memory of the dead hateful, and to involve a noble, and innocent family in shame and distress; without accomplishing the fond mother's wish, of rendering her child happy.

The misfortunes of the family of Moncrass, had so sunk them in the memory, as well as estimation of the world; that those who remember the elopement of my mother from the convent at Portugal, recollect only her apostacy; they do not trouble themselves to search out of what family she was.

My uncle's honor, spotless as the brightest day, and unclouded by a single deviation from the strictest rectitude, still supports the ancient virtue of his ancestors.

After him comes the amiable, the sensible, the elegant Moncrass his son, whose youth opens with every promise, to succeed his father in honor as in name.

How then Madam can the revival of the story of the forgotten Agnes, whose crime must be repeated as often as her injuries are remembered, and in the estimation of every member of our holy church, be considered as the primary source of her misfortunes? How can it add to the honor of her family?

*She* is no more—the ghastly smile of malice, the mysterious air of calumny, which affects to conceal what it knows, and would appear tender of the heart it wishes to stab, no longer injures *her*—All the mighty the important ills of mortality have passed away—the world itself appears to *her* but as a little speck in the immensity of space—*her* offence is pardoned—*she* rests in peace, in the bosom of her God—and her pure soul is uncontaminated by one vindictive thought.

This renunciation then concerns not St. Clare, it is your Agnes only who resigns what she can never enjoy; she gives up the treasure, the habitation of the wicked, and does not holy writ actually pronounce, that these shall become desolate!—The soul which has been formed, the mind which has been cultivated by Madame St. Lawrens, dares seek *her* treasure where the moth cannot corrupt, and conscious that she was created for nobler purposes, looks down on all the kingdoms of the earth: in this act Madam, there is besides, true wisdom, it is even the result of that self-love, to which all mankind have a propensity. I gratify my own heart without offending my Maker.

Major Melrose will provide amply in addition to what he has already done for my—oh Madam!—*my brother*—to Julia therefore my amiable, my charming sister, the daughter of my father, have I resigned all my pretentions.

Were not my recovery retarded by my uncertainty of the fate of my Edward, I should be soon, very soon on my way to D——; I have not informed my uncle of the step I have taken, with respect to my fortune; nor given him or any one of the family, but Madame de Vallmont a hint how soon I mean to leave England; because I am sure their

mistaken affections, would wish to detain me; mistaken indeed! beloved friends! you love your Agnes, you wish her happy; but would restrain her from taking the only path that in her estimation will lead to peace.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am so far recovered, that I have ventured to walk on the lawn, and feel the more air I take, the sooner I shall be able to set out;—no tidings yet of Harley, Mr. Butler, and his sweet wife have again been at the Hermitage, he has not been seen there:—well, God's will be done, I will not close this letter, 'till I can announce the time of my departure.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have rode round this beautiful seat in a small cabriole, Mr. Butler was so polite as to drive me;—he is a most amiable young man—no language can describe the painful sensations I endured, when thro' the opening of trees I saw the white buildings at the Hermitage; poor Edward! how often has he directed my eye to the spot, where he formed his visionary plans of happiness—does he exist? Is he yet among the living?

\* \* \* \* \*

Well Madam, my strength returns, my soul pants for your society, three days hence I leave Belle-View for ever.

Mr. Butler is inexpressibly polite, he invited us to take our tea in a small summer room, on the brink of a delightful river which rolls its crystal waves along several miles of green enamelled banks; and is the same that passes by the Hermitage, and supplies the stream, and fountains which decorate that delightful retreat—On the point of a rugged precipice which hangs at the extremity of the grove over this river—poor Edward had a neat gothic library, which he named the cell of contemplation:—

“Close by the cell a glassy mirror flow'd,  
 “Whose stream was shelter'd with a waving wood:  
 “The inner part display'd  
 “A cool retreat amidst surrounding shade:—  
 “So thick the twining branches nature wove,  
 “No sight, no sun could reach the dusky grove.”

It was filled with books, and musical instruments, and this was the place where he received my uncle and me, at our first visit.

May I dear Madam, with innocence retrace the days that are *no more*?

We surprized the young Philosopher, as he was called, the General commanded me previous to our going, to endeavour to prevail on him to quit the inactive life he adopted, in opposition to the wishes of all his friends.

On our arrival at the Hermitage, not finding him in the house, we sauntered after the servant, to the place I have described, there in the enjoyment of peace, and the pursuit of wisdom, we found—*my brother* —.

Edward Harley Madam is the mildest, yet at the same time the most intrepid of men.

I attempted to obey the General, but the place, the scene, the silent eloquence of Harley, instead of convincing *him* subdued *me*.

At different times afterwards he prevailed on me to give him drawings to ornament this favorite spot, and in memory of my first gift erected a small white obelisk in front of it, sacred to friendship; thither after my return to Belle-Vue, would the irresistible pleader often tempt me to go with him; there have we spent whole hours and there alas! what splendid, what inexhaustible schemes of happiness did he not form.—

The river, the stream therefore which smoothly glides, and gently laves the sides of our summer-room at Belle-Vue, is the same that rushes at the Hermitage, over incredible large stones, and forms a natural cascade, just above the library, ah my friend! what sensations did this recollection give rise to, it was by plunging into a river the mother of my Edward would have precipitated her soul into eternal ruin; how would he have been affected had he known her sad story; with what horror would he have retreated from the bank on which he delighted to recline.

Oh how unconscious of guilt, how fearless of danger was he at our last excursion to his favorite cell;—my tears dropped into the clear stream as I sadly retraced those tranquil moments, after my aching eyes had vainly sought him among the trees where he usually waited for me.

The music, which was penserosa, gave additional solemnity to the scene;—they fear'd I should be too much affected, and would drag me away; but I find my mind more composed after this little excursion, and have prevailed on them to indulge me with a second summer-house visit to-morrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am infinitely better my dear Madam to-day—I have been favored with most affectionate letters from the General, Lady Mary, and Mr. and Mrs. Moncrass; they wish me to join them at Bath—and Mrs. Butler is invited as well as Madame Vallmont,—I do not mean to answer those flattering proofs of affection, 'till I do it from Paris. I know my uncle will oppose my return to you, he offers to my view a thousand temptations; but

where is the merit of a rejection that accords with my only hope? I am entitled to retire from the world, oh how dreadful have been the lessons of experience, it has taught me!

Obliging Mr. Butler! affectionate Caroline! friendly Melrose!—I attend you for the last time—I dare not disclose my purpose to them, yet how often will my heart beat with gratitude, and true friendship to each; how painful will my sensations be, when I reflect, we never may meet again.

Madame Vallmont takes care of our conveyance, I have settled all my private affairs; and send this letter off, that it may inform you, how soon my poor tempest-beaten heart, will ask consolation, and repose, with God and you.

AGNES.

## LETTER LXXIV.

*James Butler, Esq. to Mrs. Dowager Butler.*

Belle-Vue.

I AM call'd on by manly fortitude, by duty, and by friendship; to combat with patience the pangs of unutterable grief: uncommon exertions are expected from reasonable beings, when they are assailed by uncommon calamities; this my dear mother is one of the invaluable lessons you have taught your children, not more by precept than example; I venerate your wisdom, but cannot imitate it.

I am here among beings, who are sinking under the visitation of providence; they look to *me* for *consolation*, to *me*, who am least able, either to give or receive it; they beseech me to write, Oh! my dear mother on what a subject; they think it is proper the General should be informed of our situation, which is so dreadful it will need all your prudence to break it to him, so as to soften the woes it will inflict, so as to arm him against those, that—will too probably follow.

Edward Harley Madam is no more.

Had grief, had disease deprived me of my friend, my tears would have bedewed his urn, I should have lamented his early fate, but secure in the uprightness of his principles, I should have consoled myself in the assurance, that *of such is the kingdom of heaven*.

But now he is indeed lost, he has rush'd unbidden into the presence of his creator; *he*, who never injured mortal, whose existence was one continued scene of benevolent kindness, whose religion was worthy of the God that made him, *he* has in his *last act*, abjured the mercy of the judge of the world.

Dear Lady Mary, what a task is hers! she only can prepare the good General, for the sad trial which I fear awaits him. True religion Madam never appeared so amiable to me, as at this moment, it is thence, we must now derive consolation, all mortal expedients are vain.

But I must be more explicit, the painful recital is assigned to me, because no other person here, *can* undertake it.

Agnes was gaining strength, both of mind and person; the fever had left her; her lovely countenance began to be reanimated by that perfect bloom, which rendered her fairest, among the fair; yet the melancholy which anxiety for the fate of Harley has occasioned still remained; she no longer trembled at his name, but a fixed sorrow seem'd to fill her mind; she was absent, and gloomy when we could prevail on her to join our

soulless parties *we* strove indeed to appear chearful, but our dreadful forbodeings were too visible to escape her observation.

She was every day engaged at her pen, in her own appartment 'till evening, when we prevailed on her to air in the park; the first of these little excursions not only amused, but pleased her; I had previously ordered the musical instruments to be removed to the summer room, and had placed some oratorios on the forte piano; she immediately selected the Messiah, and began the recitative—Comfort ye my people—you are but little acquainted with this charming woman, you have not heard her sing—the divine subject swelled with the harmony of her voice and execution into real comfort; we were inspired, and each took an instrument; she led through the whole oratorio—and when I expressed a fear that the exercise of her heavenly voice might retard her recovery, she answered with energy, *No Sir*, it will rather accelerate it; we took coffee there and returned to the house before sunset.

The next morning she favored us with her company at breakfast, and gracefully thanked us, me in particular, for the serene evening our solicitude to amuse her had afforded—It was a foretaste added she, of the divine avocations, which will soon employ all my hours: yet, that room, that stream which passes the gothic—she stopped, and hesitated—Ah! what less than the soul-moving notes of the immortal Handel, could have so effectually soothed the sad tumult which filled my poor breaking heart, as memory recur'd to—again she stopped—but *he* who exalts the valley, and lays the mountain low, will not forsake my Edward; oh Sir! taking my hand, you are affected, you tremble, you fear for your friend; join with me, dropping on her knees, and clasping her white hands with fervency, her face and neck crimsoned over, and her fine eyes cast upwards; join with me to implore the God of mercy, to avert the dreadful blow we fear.

Lovely Agnes! thy fervent prayers were vain, the Fiat was gone forth—the ill-fated youth was past recal.—

She arose, and glided from us like a vision.—

We then gave vent to our sorrows, and our fears; and the Major, as if struck by her mention of the river, passing by the gothic cell; recollected, that altho' the door, and window shutters next the grove were fast, the other front over the cascade might not be so; *my Caroline shuddered*—I will go said he this very afternoon, and search that place; I may at least discover some clue to lead to the poor wanderer.

Never let the wisdom of man, despise the power of instinct, the presentiment of evil.—

Did Major Melrose wish more earnestly to recover our friend, than myself? Was he more interested in his fate? more steady in his friendship? and more warm in his attachment? No my dear mother, truly might I say, my love for him surpassed the love of women; yet I trembled at the apprehension of the discoveries which might be made, in the

cell; I feared some hidden, some dreadful mystery, which I dared not to explore; and when the Major requested I would stay and attend the ladies, I felt as if a load had been removed from my mind; as if I had escaped some impending danger, as if, but I—I cannot describe it.

The Major, as Agnes had obligingly promised to favor us with her company at dinner, deferred going to the Hermitage 'till she retired, fearing his absence might alarm her.

My lines you see are crooked, but the tremor on my fingers, is infinitely short of that at my heart.

After dinner Agnes withdrew to her closet, but engaged to go to the summer-room in the evening, the Major then ordered his horse.

About six the cabriole, (she was too weak to walk across the park) was brought to the door; she was in better spirits than I had yet seen her.

How good you all are, said she, as she returned the salute of the ladies, who were just before us; and pressing my hand as I assisted her into the cabriole, how good, and how happy are you Mr. Butler, in the possession of that amiable creature; when you no longer see Agnes Neville, rest assured her orisons will be offered to heaven for your continued felicity;—my Edward, my brother if he yet exists, must do—all the rest; *he* will thank you for your kindness to his *sister*—My heart swelled to my eyes, an unbidden tear dropped on her delicate hand—she started—You have heard bad news—oh! tell me—tell me all, relieve me from this aching suspense, which whatever countenance I wear preys here, putting her hand to her heart—it was to no purpose I assured her I had not heard of Harley, she continued to implore me, to tell her what had happened, with such terrific earnestness, that I was obliged to stop several times, as the motion of the carriage added to her agitations; and deprived her of the power to respire: the ladies saw she was ill, and joined us; but it was not 'till we had reached the summer-house, we could at all succeed in our endeavours to pacify her.

Don't we miss somebody said she looking round, where is the Major?

I stammered, and again the weight of those dismal apprehensions of I knew not what, which had so recently affected *her*, almost suffocated *me*.

He has letters to write, said Madame Vallmont, with more presence of mind.

Agnes looked a meaning she did not give to words; tea and ice were served, and we began our little concert.

The river at this place, you know Madam, is wider than at any other part, the current which comes from the hill runs very rapid, 'till it divides just under the waterfall at the Hermitage, from thence it glides more gently, till it again joins in the great river T——.

The sun was now near setting, not a breath of air stir'd a leaf of the flowers which grow in profusion round the room; Agnes was in the recitative "Thy rebuke hath broken his heart," and her own as well as ours was flowing at her eyes; when Madame Vallmont arose, and going nearer the window; I beg pardon said she, but heavenly as your music is, I must interrupt it; see Mr. Butler! there is something coming down with the stream, so very brilliant it dazzles my sight, I have seen it this half hour, and have been trying to make out, what it can possibly be.

Agnes immediately left the piano, we all crowded round the window, and as Madame Vallmont said, could plainly discern something floating towards us in the river; on which the rays of the setting sun play'd, with uncommon lustre.

Slow, too slow for our eager curiosity, it advanced; the servants had been dragging; and had drawn out the nets just above the park paling; we perceived their attention was attracted, by the same object with ours, and as they were nearer to it, could sooner distinguish what it was.

Presently we saw they were alarmed, some jumped into the river, others put out their hooks, and a couple ran towards the summer-room, to unchain the pleasure-boat, which is fastened under the window.

In that instant, Major Melrose enter'd; with looks so wan, so full of terror, and despair; that like poor King Henry I found my loss, ere he his tongue; he threw himself pale, breathless, and trembling on the ground; and spreading his hands over his face wept aloud.

I could no longer support Agnes, who was standing on a stool to have a greater command of the river; my arms slackened in their power, I fell back on a chair.

Caroline flew to me, Agnes stared with wild affright, without seeming to see any of us.

Madam Vallmont, who had still continued to gaze earnestly on the river, presently turned from the window; and altho' her countenance was equally expressive of terror, and grief, she endeavoured to conceal her agitation, and taking a hand of each of the ladies, entreated them to return with her to the house.

Caroline, who tho' terrified at the situation in which she saw us, had no distinct idea of the cause; hung round me, beg'd to share my anxiety, and would not be persuaded to leave me; Madame Vallmont then exerted all her influence to prevail on Agnes to accompany her, but the dear creature was still immovable as marble.

The Major, who was actually unable to speak, 'till relieved by a copious shower of tears, which seemed to ease his manly heart; then gave utterance to his grief.

Dear ill-fated youth! generous, unfortunate creature!! Oh what hast thou done! rash boy, thou hast torn from my soul the prop on which I thought to have rested! hadst thou died in the bed of honor, hadst thou fallen the victim of sickness, but such cool premeditated *self* murder! Oh my dear Harley! how little did I foresee! when thy life was bravely ventured to save mine, thou wouldst have chosen a watry bed to die in thyself.

As if awakened from death, Agnes started, it must be so, cried she, darting out of the room.

My Caroline sunk with the Major's last words into my arms, to all appearance dead; how I got her to the house I know not, her danger engaged all my attention, 'till *she* was restored to life, I thought not of the catastrophe I had so much feared.

As soon as my dearest wife recovered her reason, she asked after poor Agnes; and our surprise was mutual at finding, neither her, the Major, nor Madame Vallmont were returned to the house; at her earnest request I then hastened back to the summer-room, which I found quite deserted.

I then, guided by the sound of Madame Vallmont's voice went round to the grass plot by the park palings; where I beheld the poor desolate dying Agnes; her hair torn, and dishevelled, hanging in loose ringlets; her head cloaths and neck covering, lying in tatters on the ground; her beautiful arms bare, and all the symptoms of wild distraction glaring round the lovely ruin.

She was just then changing from a fit of raving, to melancholy madness; and was sitting on the ground by the dead body of our lost Edward; his head, swollen, and disfigured, was on her lap; with one hand she held a smelling bottle to his nose; the other with her eyes were lifted to heaven, in a supplicating attitude; Madame Vallmont in agony was beseeching her to go with her, and endeavouring to cover her head, and neck, which however she would not suffer her to do; and to complete the sad group, the Major stood at the feet of the corpse, his arms folded, his eyes fix'd, and no sign of sense; except the most bitter groans.

Why Madam? said I to Mrs. Vallmont, why do you permit her to continue in sight of such an object? Oh my poor Edward! and I could not help kneeling on the other side of the body.

You remember Madam he ran from us in his bridal cloaths; the unwelcome errand on which you came to Belle-Vue, possibly engrossed your attention, so much, you did not observe his dress, it was embroidered in the first taste, with foil and spangles; I bespoke it at his desire in London; Nothing said the unhappy youth, can be too elegant for my Agnes, and since I am in grace with her, "I will maintain it at some little cost."

In this fatal dress he plunged from the precipice of his cell into the river; where we suppose he must have lain under water and again floated at the only time when it was

possible he could be seen by his unhappy sister; as we find, she intended leaving us the next morning, her departure for the convent of Madame St. Lawrens was fixed, and the time she had passed in her apartment had been devoted to the final arrangement of her affairs.

Madame Vallmont rather hurt at my manner asked me, how I would have her act; Do you suppose Sir said she, I want either spirit, or inclination to enforce any measure that would tend to the restoration of my beloved friend? no Sir! yet I cannot tear her from that affecting object, nor had I strength equal to such an act, would I, my heart would not let me do it.

I had now taken his lifeless hand, and could no longer restrain my tears, dear Harley! friend! brother! I called him. Agnes heard me, What, cried she, are there more brothers lost? hush, be silent, breathe not, stir not, wake not my beloved, my own Edward, my—Oh no! no! pardon, pardon, 'twas but for a moment—Alas Sir! rising on her knees, and gently laying his head on the grass, then crossing her bare arms on her heaving bosom, and looking with mournful wildness in my face; Alass Sir! it was involuntary, we were ignorant of the sin, you see, pointing to the body, he *is innocent*, and the Lady Abbess will receive her poor Agnes.

Mrs. Vallmont in hopes to prevail on her to leave the body, begged she would immediately set out; I am ready my dear Agnes to accompany you to Paris said the good woman, offering to assist her to rise.

No, no, no, no, repeated she with quickness, shaking her head, her hair flying about, it is all over, we will not part, in heaven there are no marriages; oh! casting her eyes tenderly on the corps, what heart so hard to injure thee; cruel! barbarous! we had mothers once, and they are angels; but we have no father, no mother now; we will lay on the cold ground—together; ah poor, poor Edward! why didst thou leave me? I looked, and looked for thee 'till my head ached and my heart was bursting—he took me Sir, again addressing me, out of the fire, and his poor hands were burnt, and his face was scorched; you know best—to be sure, but I would ask one simple question—you gave me absolution, you told me I might love him without sin, yet here you see he lies, and the wind blows on his poor head, and he is wet, and cold, but I, I will cover him, I will hide him here in my heart; and oh my dear mother! the raving fit returned, the sweet creature actually tore her cloaths off; the housekeeper, her own maid, Mrs. Vallmont's and other female servants, were now melancholy and affrighted spectators of a scene, that struck every beholder with anguish.

I bid them force her from the body, but their utmost strength was unequal to the task; she clasped her arms round it, called on her Edward, her brother to save to protect her; I was obliged myself to unclasp her hand by force, and carry her in my arms; still she grasped at the body; and once so twisted her hands in his hair, that in the violent struggle, two large locks were torn from his head.

As soon as I had taken her in my arms, the body was removed; when she saw the men touch it, her shrieks which pierced my ears as we crossed the park were the most dismal that ever sorrow wrung from distraction; and continued without intermission, 'till Doctor Greville took some blood from her, and forced a medicine down her throat, which from her violent struggles he had great difficulty to do.

During the operation she called in the most pathetic terms, on Edward, on her mother, Dear St. Clare hear the cries of your Agnes, carry me to Madame St. Lawrens, deep, deep bury me deep, take me from the sons of violence; oh sillicide! sillicide! what hast thou done? the mothers were thy victims, must the children also bleed? oh spare us! spare us!

Her shrieks still sound in my ears, the Doctor's humanity was as conspicuous as his skill, he was sensibly affected.

The medicine was intended to compose her mind, I doubt it has benumbed her faculties, without having that effect; she now lies quiet indeed, and her eyes are closed, but such sighs break from her, as would melt the most insensible.

If on her recovery from her present stupor, for indeed it is not rest; she should ask any questions, the Doctor who continues with her will answer according to the state she is in; her apartment is darkened, and no breath heard but her own deep sighs; soon, soon I fear it will be more silent; it is I think impossible, considering her late illness, and subsequent weakness, she should ever more be restored to health.

As to Edward, his end has fatally justified all my apprehensions; I ever dreaded his extreme sensibility, and it woefully confirms the maxim I so ineffectually enforced with all my might to *him*, that *the greatest danger to young minds is keeping them unemployed*; the time which in youth is not *well* filled, will in the end prove to be the source of evils innumerable.

We have removed the body into the house, where a shocking ceremony must be gone through.

The Major found the front of the cell fastened up, but on examination perceived that the door on the other side was open; he then went round, and up the dismal steps.

The moment he entered, he saw the hat with the white favor which the wretched bridegroom had worn, lying on the ground; on the table were two papers, one sealed and without directions, the other, six lines intended for a will; we have not had courage yet to open the sealed paper, nor have we indeed mentioned having found either; as we fear the coroner will be scrupulous in his verdict: his death now bears some appearance of accident, and you will not doubt but we wish to have it so considered.

My heart my good, my honored mother, labours under the keenest impressions of sorrow, yet am I, tho' so ill qualified, obliged to assume the office of comforter.

My poor Caroline's grievous situation, could only give me strength of mind; she has successive faintings every half hour, she is indeed dreadfully affected; yet I dare not expect you here, this fatal event, and that which will, I am firmly of opinion follow it; will render your presence necessary at Bath.

The Major is extremely indisposed, he keeps to his apartment, *that* indeed we all do; his is a generous, brave, yet tender heart—I just looked in on him this morning, his hat was slapt, a silk handkerchief was loosely tied round his neck, he was walking up and down his room, and seemed afraid to trust his voice in making any enquiries; to mine, after *his* health, he could only answer, Never never worse; and turning from me—She is alive I think they say, it is more than I expected.

His valet informs me he has not been in bed the night—and thus miserable are all the inmates of Belle-Vue.

It is not for me Madam to dictate to you, you are certainly the best judge how to break this dismal matter to the General; my Caroline is at present too ill to be removed, nor would she, if she were not, leave the unhappy Agnes; yet I fervently hope, the General will so arrange us, that we may soon and forever leave this place; God protect the best of mothers prays her dutiful and affectionate

J. BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXV.

*Mr. Butler in continuation.*

Belle-Vue.

I proceed Madam, to inform you, that the coroner's verdict being in favor of the last respect we could pay to the memory of my friend, we are just returned from his interment—to *whom* as he said, did *he* belong? yet never was a man more sincerely lamented.

To avoid the croud we had every reason to expect would assemble on the sad occasion, we appointed the midnight hour for the solemn act, of consigning his loved remains to his original dust.

But the veneration and respect of some, and the gratitude and affection of others of his neighbours, were too vigilant to be eluded; *they* were no less assiduous in their enquiries, than *we* in our precautions.

We had forbid the bells tolling, the melancholy circumstances attending his death, were of a nature that required concealment; and a private funeral was what decency demanded from us, who knew, with all his former virtue, beneficence and goodness of heart; he had at last, acted a part unworthy of a man, and a christian; but as our reasons were not known, and as few people suspected, and fewer really knew, the manner of his leaving the world, there were many who took great offence at the hour, and privacy of his interment.

At the foot of the hill which leads to his village, we were met by a large body of people; most of them carrying torches; whose sighs, and groans, were the only oral proof of their number; ten boys, and ten girls, to whom he annually allowed warm cloathing, and for whose schooling he paid for chaunting in the church, immediately began an anthem, the rest respectfully opened a way for the hearse, and coach, and then fell into a procession behind.

The moon Madam faintly shone, we saw her transient beams through the trees as we passed, the *now* deserted hermitage—the white obelisk, which the lamented Edward consecrated to friendship, struck us with sorrow, and regret; the wind chair from whence he took views of the fine vale of Belle-Vue, now never more to be occupied, looked I thought like a gaping sepulchre; and the timber, and bricks, which lay in confused heaps round the house, they were intended to decorate; gave it already the appearance of that ruin, in which it will soon lie; the whole time we were passing the wall, our own feelings were too accute for utterance, but the sobs, and whispering lamentations of the men, women, and children who followed the hearse, were too general, not to be heard.

When the corpse was taken out of the hearse, six young men clad in decent mourning, insisted, tho' in the most respectful whispers, on carrying it, the undertakers men with some reluctance therefore resigned their office; and we proceeded to the body of the church, which was so filled with decent people, that when our procession came in, it was extremely crouded, a great number eagerly pressed round the coffin, some to touch, others to see what contained the last remains of him, they called the good young squire.

I directed the pall to be removed, and they who could read, sobbed over the simple inscription,

Edward Harley, obit 23d of August,  
Ætat. 23  
Alas how dear!

I could not help particularly remarking a very decent white headed old man, whose spectacles were often put on to read the inscription, but as often taken off to be wiped; and he was after numberless efforts, obliged to relinquish the attempt, and retired audibly sobbing among the croud; this was old Lucas of the mill.

When their affectionate curiosity was gratified, the service was concluded; and the Major, myself, and Mr. Montford, hastened from the sacred spot, where now rests the mortal part of our beloved Edward; but the vault was no sooner closed, than the grief, which respect had kept silent among the people, broke out into the most clamorous wailings.

The friend of the poor, of mankind was no more.

He never strained on a tenant in all his days, said a rough looking farmer, I shall never have so good a landlord.

My own son, cried a decent elderly woman, was not dearer to me.

How respectful was he to the aged, said an old veteran, who is an officer on half pay.

And how good to the sick, joined a pallid looking husbandman.

How charitable to the poor was echoed by them all.

And said a pretty damsel modestly advancing, her face covered with tears, how tender hearted to poor maidens, these were the gloves he gave me at Patty Lucas's burial, I little thought I should wear them at his own.

This simple remembrance renewed the sighs, and groans of the whole assembly; *one* remembered when he was last seen in the village, *another* had particularly remarked how blooming Madam Agnes, and the good squire looked, when they went to pay master Thrifty his rent, for farmer Clod's sick widow.

This brought another mourner to our particular notice, it was the widow herself; a thin sickly looking woman, with a fine infant in her arms, and three others hanging to her gown and apron.

Yes said she, he preserved a home for the widow, and he fed her fatherless children! he was too good for this world, my dear Johnny is now with him, and *may be* who knows but I may see them both in a better place.

Another repeated his very words, and as if by consent they again all crowded towards the vault, the rector at their head; insomuch that we pressed with difficulty through them, and returned home so unfit for conversation, that we parted without breaking silence.

Agnes continues totally deprived of her reason, her raving returned yesterday morning; and how shall I say it? her fine form and lovely arms, were obliged to be confined by a strait waistcoat, which gave her infinite pain, she struggled and remonstrated but it was absolutely necessary; after bruising her delicate limbs with her vain endeavors to loosen the straps, she lay some time without moving.

In that interval the Major went to her bed side, merely as he said to look at her before he went to the funeral: she had not yet known any body, but his mourning struck her; she gazed earnestly at him.

You are dressed then, said she, in a faint low voice, but *that, that* is the mockery of woe; where is Edward? is he dressed too? let me ask you Major, what have you done with him? he would not have served *you* so—you know he plunged into the water to save *you*—but nobody will assist him, but *me*, and they have bound *me*, see, see, there! he sinks he is lost; help! help! —Oh Edward! my dear dear brother! they hold me, they will not let me come to thee.

The gleam of hope, which the recollection of the Major raised, then vanished; she continued dismally raving, and shrieking, 'till we were out of hearing; when she was forced to swallow another potent draught, which as usual threw her into a stupor, that prevented her exhausting herself by raving, without rendering her insensible to sorrow.

I inclose Edward's posthumous letter, which you will please to return—we have none of us fortitude enough to copy it.

Mr. Montford pressed us to go with him to his seat—but Caroline is still very ill—and I despair of her amendment here. Adieu dear Madam.

J. BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXVI.

*Harley's posthumous Letter to Mr. Butler.*

I have escaped Butler—I tore myself from her arms—I burst in anguish—I die in despair.

Once I could shed tears—now my brain burns to madness, and the soothing stillicide of unutterable grief no longer washes my haggard cheeks.

This *was* the cell of contemplation—It is *now* the cavern of despair.

Hither the son of sorrow brings his load of anguish—and here will he forever lay down.

Thou Butler, wouldst bid me live—and with all the sophistry of art, and reason, prove that the proper and rational exercise of a manly mind is to combat misfortune and resign itself to fate—But I have *that* within *me* surpasseth all that heart ever conceived, all that tongue ever uttered— — — —Hark—What is she whose voice in pleasing terror still vibrates on my ear?—whose form filling the space of the whole creation hangs like a transparent curtain before my eyes!—It is my *wife*—my *sister*—

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh God! thou only witness of my last agonies—thou seest the struggles of my soul—thou knowest how inadequate is the strength of thy poor creature, to the task thy justice inflicts on the unhappy son of a perjured father.

The incestuous fever still burns in my veins—still throbs at my heart—Oh pardon—pardon—I resign the life thou hast been pleased to load with guilt—

I could brave misfortune—I could endure calamity—but I cannot live the victim of so horrible a passion.

Shall the despairing lover of his *own sister*, dare to appear in the presence of the pure of heart?—*Never! never!*—Am I not the offspring of infamy—heir only to the weak folly of my frail mother, to the wicked arts of my father? and should not such a race be exterminated?—What vacuum shall I leave in the world?—what trace of my existence?—to whom do I belong?

Life instead of ending, will aggravate my offences—even now, I hear her soft voice dying on the summer breeze—her image floats before my eyes.

The tumult in my senses, is a summons to death; then only, when the vital blood has ceased to flow, shall I cease to adore her.

Unhappy mother!—oh! that the hand of charity had not arrested thy early fate, that thou and thy guilty burthen had perished, e'er he had cause to curse in the frenzy of despair, the being thou gavest him.

Insult not thou hateful light the dark anguish of my soul, with thy piercing rays—what have I to do with thee?—I see without thy officious aid, the black abyss before me,—the impassable gulph that will soon separate me from my *friend*—my *sister*—from *Agnes*—it is terrible, it appals my senses; but still more terrible—still more am I appall'd at that which now environs me—I strain my aching sight—I look round—no one way is left to escape—to fly from myself—no mortal power can help the self-devoted—the poison is rooted in my nature—it is a part of me—

Sister! Agnes! Angel! oh why! why so late! Father of the creation wilt thou not be merciful—

Under the foam of the rushing torrent—at the foot of the precipice, let my beating brain have rest—

Let my sorrows sink for ever—let them be hid beneath the surface of the passing stream.

It was the fate one parent consigned me to, e'er yet I bore the hateful likeness of the other.

I complete my destiny—

This was the place from whence the soul of Agnes recoiled, when first her angel form irradiated my dwelling—here—when my love had received the sanction of her friends, and the assent of the purest of female hearts, how often have I led her “nothing loth” and while on my knees I breathed my ardent vows; the falling cascade, the dashing of the waters against the rock under our feet, and the impervious shade, all conspired to bind in solemn compact, that union which nature abhorred to witness—oh Agnes! those vows must be no more remembered—hast thou forgotten them? are they all expunged from thy memory? canst thou not select one? not one? a brother might offer in pure fraternal love, to a virtuous, a beloved sister? oh no! no! my only asylum from the fascinating guilt, is *death*.

Butler farewell—adieu my Caroline—*here* we meet no more—and oh, thou—whom I dare not name—wilt thou not sometimes think—sometimes drop a tear over the fate of thy departed Edward?—if there has been an action of my life, on which thy uncontaminated mind dares to dwell, without the anguish of that self reproach under which I die; let it be ever present to thy memory, cherish it for the sake of him to whom thou wert dearer than life, but do not lament the act that restores thee to the blessings of society—my existence would have impeded thy happiness—and (for do I not know thy

heart, thy gentle—thy sympathising heart) my sufferings would have been the bane of thy peace—thou wilt now rise superior to the storm in which I perish; a few short moments, and I am no more—I dare not pray for you. Self-convinced of the sinfulness of the deed I am on the point of committing, I dare not ask of God, ought but mercy to the immortal part of,

The lost

EDWARD.

## LETTER LXXVII.

*Mrs. Dowager Butler to J. Butler, Esq.*

Bath.

My dearest Son,

I Send this express, and shall follow it with Mr. and Mrs. Moncrass to morrow.

To say your young friend is lamented here is poorly to express our sorrow and regret at his premature departure; but as every poison is said to contain its own antidote, so every affliction to which in this life we are subject, when viewed with the calm eye of patient resignation, has a bright side. In all the calamities with which it has pleased heaven to visit me; and you know my dear James they were many; I have been enabled to preserve my fortitude, by the certainty that in the end, the events I most deplored, would turn to matter of consolation, and that I should bend in future thankfulness for present evil.

Considering the man, his peculiar turn of mind, and more peculiar situation; the impressions he early received from that romantic, tho' worthy woman, Mrs. Montford, and the refined sensibility, so dangerous to him, but delightful to her, which she took such uncommon pains to cultivate; and considering also his unfortunate attachment to Miss Neville, and the critical development of the fatal secret of their consanguinity; the rash step which so sinfully ended his mortal existence, was not more to be dreaded than expected.

The General and Lady Mary are drowned in tears, yet are more grieved than surprised; but the situation of his niece affects her uncle too much, the gout returned to his stomach soon after your letter arrived.

Lord Ruthven is also very ill; his pride ill-brooks the disgrace the wicked Neville entailed on his family; and the impossibility of *now* avenging the injury done Lady Mary, increases in no small degree the weakness natural to his age and infirmity.

Lady Mary is far from well, but her apprehensions for the lives of two persons so dear to her, while they occupy her mind, give her strength, and spirits, to assist in the care of them. She deplores the poor maniac, and feels the utmost concern for your Caroline; she insists on my coming to you, and Mrs. Moncrass, whose love for Agnes is truly sisterly, begs to accompany me, her husband escorts us.

My impatience to join your endeavours for the restoration of your amiable wife equals my desire to oblige Lady Mary, who thinks the General will be pleased at my being with Agnes.

Doctor C—— from hence, and Doctor M—— from London, are engaged to go immediately to Belle-Vue, the former travels with us.

Poor Harley, my tears will flow at the recollection of his many amiable qualities, but I console myself my dear son in the reflection, that had he lived, he could never have regained his peace of mind; he was certainly guiltless in his passion for his sister, but there is something so distressing in the retrospect of such a connection, it would have always preyed on him; his sentiments were too refined, his ideas too delicate, to be engaged in, or amused by the common avocations which Pliny justly calls, “The solemn impertinences of life:” and tho’, as the same author observes, “that sort of death which we cannot impute to the hand of providence, is of all others the most to be lamented,” and tho’ we who are blessed with the enlightened doctrine of christianity, believe the sin of suicide, to be the most desperate, and unpardonable against the trinity; yet the mourners for poor Harley, are certain he would not have thus abandoned his friends, and blasted their hopes, of his regaining his peace of mind, if in truth they were not desperate: for my own part, I am convinced, neither the precepts of philosophy, nor the commerce of the world, would have ever restored the unhappy youth to himself; while therefore I lament as a christian, the manner of his death, I cannot help considering it, as the end of his temporal sorrow; and with respect to eternity, oh God how unmeasureable are thy mercies!

CONSTANCE BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXVIII.

*Mrs. Butler to Lady Mary Moncrass.*

Belle-Vue.

I write, as your Ladyship commanded, the instant of my arrival; and would to God I could send you either hope or comfort, the former would be deceiving you, and the latter is not to be found in this dwelling.

I regret bringing Mrs. Moncrass, I cannot prevail on her to leave the dark chamber, where the miserable maniac is—she conceits that she recollects her, and will not suffer the medicines to be administered, by any but herself; which however nothing but fear would induce Agnes to swallow.

Sweet creature! her arms are very much swelled, and mark'd with the straps of the strait waistcoat; Julia insisted on having it taken off, she is sure her poor sister will be patient with *her*; finding she had continued three hours quiet, the doctors were consulted on the propriety of getting her up; they feared a raving fit, but as your daughter would not cease her importunities they at length consented. Agnes suffered them to do what they pleased with her, not exhibiting the least sign either of satisfaction, or the reverse; nature my dear friend is not quite exhausted, but her reason is totally gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

I was extremely shocked on entering the dismal apartment just now.

Mrs. Moncrass was on her knees, rubbing her arms, which were swelled, and bathing them with her tears; Agnes was in the attitude of stooping to her, and whispering, but so low, that it was impossible to distinguish her words; when she saw me, tho' the room was so dark, she could not distinguish had she been sensible, who I was; she was alarmed, and stop'd; as I approached, her agitation seemed to increase, and taking something out of her bosom, she gave it in a hurry to Julia, then opening her wrapper, she said she in a low weak voice, I have it not—do not! do not! faintly attempting to scream; let me go to Madame St. Lawrens, St. Clare *will weep*, looking at her *swelled arms*, then leaning back in her chair, and closing her eyes, she whispered inwardly.

I could not bear to stay any longer in the room, and entreated Mrs. Moncrass to accompany me to a more chearful apartment; but as I said she will not be prevailed on to leave her: what she was so anxious to conceal from me, was some hair she had torn from poor Harley's head when she was forced from his body; and though so entirely lost to recollection, in other respects, she remembered to reclaim the deposit, as soon as I was gone; this trifling incident convinces Julia she is a favourite, and the good creature will not stir from her chamber.

My daughter is still very ill, and weak, and my son too much affected himself to console her; I have consented to their departure, as the melancholy scene will be renewed as long as they remain here; Mr. Montford, who now fears he shall lose Caroline, entreats them to go to him, and left his coach for their conveyance; Mrs. Benson, a worthy matronly woman; who was housekeeper to Mrs. Montford, and since to Harley, attends her young lady, as she always call'd Mrs. Butler; they leave us to-morrow.

Major Melrose is become a perfect misanthrope, he neither eats nor drinks with us, or stirs out of his own room, except to that of Agnes; and morning, and evening to the spot, where Harley's body was laid, when first taken out of the river; I told him of the General's situation, and of your distress; all bad madam, answered he, very bad, but I will go to them as soon as this poor girl is released, she will soon be the happiest among us, she will soon be with the dear boy.

My son had not resolution to go to the Hermitage; his man went to affix his seals to the different locks, 'tis a dismal place, he says, the grass is already grown over the walks, and the beautiful woods are entirely deserted; we cannot prevail on any of the servants to inhabit the house, it is a received notion among the common people, that the squire walks:

My spirits are so depressed that I can say little to you on such a combination of distressful circumstances; only request you to call to mind how many blessings are yet in your possession, your Moncrass is the very Moncrass you have so long loved, without deviating from the honor, and constancy of his character; you must sooth, and comfort him, you must prepare him for the worst; and you must yourself remember, we are commanded "*not to mourn like those who have no hope.*"

Agnes the instant she is released from this world, will join the seraphic choir in the heaven of heavens.

If spirits are allowed to recognize each other in a future state as I firmly *hope*, and *believe* they are, the bosom of the sainted mother, will receive the blameless spirit of her beatified child; in this faith I feel a kind of holy reverence, every time I enter the chamber, I see it is true her emaciated form, lovely even in death, I hear her groans, and witness the restless wanderings of her mind; but I cannot help thinking that even *now*, the spirit of St. Clare is permitted to hover over her daughter.

Doctor C—— writes to the General, he approves of all that has been done by Doctor Greville; but coincides in his opinion, that the sweet saint is dying—poor Madame Vallmont—but we are all mourners.

C. BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXIX.

*Mrs. Butler in continuation.*

Belle-Vue.

*Midnight.*

I Am excessively fatigued, the faculties of my mind, as well as body seem utterly exhausted; a tasteless insipidity, and weariness pervades my whole system; yet I have no inclination to retire to rest.

The Doctors are apprehensive this night may prove decisive, they think before the last change takes place, it is probable, Agnes may have an interval of reason: cold sweats, and inward convulsions have for the last two hours seized her, I have really expected her dissolution every moment; she is however now rather better.

Julia will not believe she is near her end, she flatters herself there is yet hope.

*Morning.*

Mrs. Moncrass is laid down, I take my pen by the bed-side of Agnes; no need *now* of the strait waistcoat; Doctor M—— arrived at five in the morning—they have cut off her fine hair, and laid a blister on her head—she made not the least resistance, but rather seemed pleased; she thought she was taking her vows; the cutting off the hair you know is a ceremony always observed by nuns at their profession; she would kneel, and we supported her; oh! how solemn was her look, she prayed in french with such fervour that she seemed lifted above mortality, but was so weak she fainted before the operation was finished.

When it was over, we laid her on the bed, the cold sweats returned and her convulsions were stronger than the last night; but both these mortal symptoms are gone off, and she seems to rest for the first time since she lost her reason.

*Evening.*

They hope much from the blister, that it may prolong her life, I will not doubt; but as to her recovery, I believe that impossible.

*Midnight.*

She is still composed, I am retiring to rest.

*Morning.*

I was awoke at six, by Julia, who informed me that Agnes was perfectly sensible; that Father Dominick had been called at her desire, and was now in her chamber with Madame De Vallmont, shut up at their devotions; and added she with a smile of hope, Agnes speaks quite strong—I persuaded her to repose on my bed, and promised to watch in her place.

\* \* \* \* \*

The good priest has just left me, he has, he told me administered the sacrament to Agnes, she was quite composed and spoke of Harley's death with a serene resignation. She enquired with some degree of solicitude where he was buried, and on being told, said softly, it cannot be, she spoke of her approaching dissolution, and directed him to take into his possession, some deeds out of her cabinet, (of which she gave him the key) and after her death deliver them with her thankful, and dutiful commendation to the General; she requested her body might be sent to Madame St. Lawrens, for interment—Madame Vallmont had some conversation with her, he *believes* respecting the embalment, he extolled her piety, and natural goodness of heart, he lamented the miserable end of Harley, and left *me* in tears for the early fate of the dying Agnes.

I then went to her apartment, the curtains were thrown open, and Madame Vallmont sat at the head of the bed supporting her young friend. Although she had before seen me for so short a time, she immediately recollected me; and after looking earnestly in my face, closed her eyes, and tears which she had not shed since the fatal evening, forced their way through her silken eyelashes; she articulated several words but we could only distinguish—*fatal messenger*—Judging by this, that the sight of me renewed the memory of the dreadful past, I retreated out of her sight, but did not leave the room.

Mrs. Moncrass could not long compose herself to rest, she very soon returned to Agnes.

Oh my beloved Julia cried Agnes, how long have you been with me? when did you come?—Come to close the dying eyes of your poor friend.

Not so my Agnes replied Julia, not my dear friend to close your eyes, but to assist in restoring you to health, to your friends; your noble uncle is breaking his heart about you.

I hope not rejoined Agnes, he feels I do not doubt my calamity,—but a little time will reconcile him to the only event which could restore my peace, and reunite me to God—Oh Julia my sweet sister, what a heart must mine have been to have seen what I have seen, and lived;—I go at an early period of life, my years it is true are few, but my afflictions, oh Julia! how heavy have they been, yet blessed be the holy Jesus, I have no unrepented sin to impede my flight to the mansion of peace; I shall be restored to my dear mother! I shall be among the chosen of heaven! and see my Redeemer face to face! and what is the happiness of the most happy *here*, compared to that? I wished indeed to die with Madame St. Lawrens, but my soul will reach the throne of mercy as soon from

hence, and let I implore you, my body be carried to her convent; let my dust be mixed with the holy earth of the pious sisterhood. Weep not Julia, rather pray for my release; you know not putting her hand to her heart, what I have suffered *here*; do you not tremble to think, that had my life been now lengthened, the fate of that dear unhappy brother might have been contagious?—oh Julia, poor! poor Edward! he was *your* brother, as well as *mine*—and he was all that was virtuous, tender, and good;—but he is gone—he died for me, and (weeping) he was wet, and cold,—but do not discover it, I hid him here, here in my heart's core; she was now wandering, again, and poor Julia sunk on her knees by the side of the bed in tears; I sent for the Doctors who were displeased, we had suffered her to talk so much.

She would rise, where was her new muslin? she would be dressed, and walk out; she had promised to meet some body, no matter who.

The Doctors mildly persuaded her, but in vain—they feared a violent paroxism would be fatal, she was therefore indulged.

Madame Vallmont presented her wrapper, she refused it with indignation.

Was not she going out? did not every body dress? she would have her white lutestring, and new muslin; this was her bridal dress, and at last to gratify her it was brought; she ordered her maid to put it on, and tho' so faint as hardly to be heard, she was not to be put out of this whim; it was just thrown round her, she then attempted to walk, but sunk suddenly into Madame Vallmont's arms, whom we assisted to place her in an easy chair, and then at the doctor's request left the room.

*Noon.*

She is now in a sweet slumber, yet speaks inwardly, St. Clare, Victoire, Edward frequently pass her lips; this sleep must be refreshing, it is the first natural rest she has had.

*Three o' Clock.*

My son and daughter are just gone, Caroline fainted as they were lifting her into the coach. I have again looked in on Agnes, she is still asleep she breathes much easier, and no longer talks. Julia and I are both indisposed, we are going to walk in the air; the dark close room affects my head—Madame Vallmont worn out with fatigue is laid down on Agnes's bed, whose nurse and maid watch in her stead.

\* \* \* \* \*

Great God, what a scene! all is over Lady Mary! Agnes is no more!

Sweet saint!! thy face has recovered its tranquil beauty, madness and misery are vanquished! I am too much affected to give you particulars, Major Melrose will take the pen.

C. BUTLER.

## LETTER LXXX.

*Major Melrose to Lady Mary Moncrass.*

Madam,

Belle-Vue.

I write, I *oblige* myself to write to you, because it is necessary you should know our present situation, and because you shall have time to digest the proper method of breaking to the General, the death of his niece; if indeed we ought to call that death, which in such a creature, is rather to be looked on as a period to mortality, than the end of life: and I am so selfish as to wish, the first agonies of grief may subside before I join you.

Mrs. Butler informed you of the tranquil state in which she left the angelic Agnes; I afterwards saw her myself.

They had placed a pillow between her head and easy chair, at the back of which the nurse when I left her stood.

Madame Vallmont wearied with continual watching was dropt asleep.

Miss Neville's maid, a poor young thing she had taken under her protection out of charity; tired undoubtedly of her confinement in a dark room, asked me if I thought she might venture to go down into the servant's hall to dinner; to which as the nurse was present, and Agnes so easy I assented.

The countenance of the divine creature was then perfectly placid; her arms, which still bear the marks of the strait waistcoat, hung, one over the elbow of the chair, the other rested on a small table, on which stood the volatiles they had often occasion to use in the apartment—she was wrapped in a fine muslin dress, her head loaded with linen on the top, on account of the blister; so that her forehead down to her eyebrows was covered; but there was enough of her face seen to display inconceivable beauty.

I contemplated the lovely wreck a few minutes, and then took my daily walk to the spot of earth, on which the body of my preserver was laid, when it was taken out of the water.

And here let me avow, I loved, and I lament Edward Harley, as a fond father would, his only hope. I am a batchellor of fortune, I was ill treated by the only relations I have, before I became independant of the world; my property was earned in the field of honor, under the torrid zone—my riches are asiatic, but they are not the price of my integrity—consanguinity, is the last thing I shall think of in the disposal of my estates—the brave fellow preserved my life, at the risk of his own; the longer I knew him, the dearer he was to me; but he is gone—he is out of the reach of *my gratitude*—nevertheless

there is not a being he valued, a place he approved, or an incident that will bring him to my memory, but what I will cherish.

The grass plot therefore, where his body lay, attracts *me*, I visit it twice, sometimes more, every day; and if Belle-Vue was mine, I would there erect a cenotaph that should proclaim to all who saw it, the love Jack Melrose bore to Edward Harley.

But—poor fellow! he is as I said gone—his honest soul, and humane disposition, could not parry the shafts of his adverse fortune; they entered and rankled in his only vulnerable part; he found his wounds were incurable, and therefore voluntarily resigned his life.

This now among the ancients would be recorded as a virtue—with us moderns it is a heinous sin—well be it so, his death we trust has expiated; it is plain I, at least do not think his is a condemned spirit; for I am never so easy, as when I fancy I am, where it may possibly hover—accordingly, I take a pleasure, unknown to minds, whose attachments are bounded by the poor shallow confines of mortality, in marking the very grass his poor body pressed—there as I said before, if the place was mine, his monument should reach the skies; and there I was, in a reverie the most acceptable to me, when I heard a confused sound of women's voices approaching me.

I had scarce lifted up my eyes, when I beheld a female figure dart across the lawn, leap the Ha Ha with the speed of an arrow, and ran towards me, which had the exact appearance of what we are told of a spectre. It was Agnes! her loose flowing white dress and ghastly woe-worn looks, the celerity with which she advanced to the place where I stood, and my late reflection, all contributed to unman me; I trembled, and had but just presence of mind to receive her in my arms.

So inattentive was the poor thing to every object, but that on which her disordered imagination was fixed, she neither saw, nor regarded me; but weak, exhausted; and out of breath; she sunk involuntary on my bosom; her eyes hollow, and dreadfully dim, seemed starting from their orbits, her head with a convulsive motion was turned from side, to side, as if in search of something, which not perceiving, she meekly crossed her arms on her breast, and lifting her eyes upward, with a look so mournful, yet so resigned, that it will be ever present to my memory; she fetched a deep sigh, her sweet face like an over charged lilly dropped on my breast, and with another deeper sigh she expired.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had no idea she was dead, the faintings she had been subject to, were often attended with symptoms as alarming as those which now appeared; I therefore hastened towards the house with my lifeless burthen, and was soon met by Mrs. Butler, and your daughter, whom she had passed with incredible swiftness, followed by a posse of the domestics, who alarmed by the cries of the *nurse*, were coming in pursuit of her; *she* also had the misfortune to slumber when left with Agnes, and although she was awakened by

the rustling of her cloaths as the dear maniac ran or rather flew out of the apartment, yet it was impossible either to stop, or overtake her.

Ah sir! cried Mrs. Butler, as soon as she looked on her face, she is gone! she will never more revive!

Mrs. Moncrass would not be of her opinion, she kissed her cold lips, her Agnes she was sure would yet recover.

Doctor M—— had walked out, and doctor C—— was gone to view the Hermitage; I went immediately in pursuit of the former, leaving the women all employed in vain application of the volatile, &c. and had the good fortune to meet him on the terrace—on our return the countenances of all present, announced their despair; a vein was breathed, that is, it was cut, merely to satisfy your Julia, and Madame Vallmont. We were then retiring but fainting and hysterics among the ladies, and the truly pitiable situation of the little waiting girl, who from the moment she heard of her mistress's running out, blamed herself for the consequence; rendered the doctor's assistance necessary.

As to me madam, I am not of importance to any body, and were it not, that my soul on principle condemns the act; I should I believe, soon join the departed pair.

It was among the last requests of the deceased that her mortal remains should be deposited in the church of Madame St. Lawrens's convent: your Julia is very urgent to accompany her there!

What cries she, raising her tearful eye to mine, shall Agnes! my friend! my sister! be sent out of the kingdom, without *one* weeping follower, whose blood, as well as love she shared?? dear Major let me see her corpse received by Madame St. Lawrens; it will be a relief to my heart, as long as I have the power of recollection.

Mr. Moncrass did not indeed speak, but—I saw by his looks, he disapproved of this wild scheme of his wife: I therefore proposed, that she should immediately return with Mrs. Butler, and Madame Vallmont to Bath; and that Mr. Moncrass should attend the corpse with me to Paris—we prevailed on her after a great many lady like objections, to consent to this arrangement: which was no sooner fixed, than an objection was started by Madame Vallmont, which was not to be obviated.

She declared her resolution, not only to attend the body, but to end her days, and leave her own to be deposited near her young friend in the convent.

I had indulged some vague distant hope of prevailing on this good woman, to accept an arm chair for herself, and a cushion for her dog, at my fire side: there were subjects which even “in narrative old age” I foresaw would amuse us—she would never tire of talking of Agnes, nor I of Harley; and the virtues of the two unfortunates were so

nearly allied, they would be naturally blended; Mrs. Vallmont's prudence created respect, her years, as well as character, would blunt the edge of satire and scandal; for which, and many other reasons I had formed the aforesaid plan. But all my air castles are fallen, no settlement, friendship, or protection; will change her resolution; notwithstanding Mrs. Butler, both in your name, and her own, courted her acceptance of independence, in whatever way would most conduce to her happiness.

The woman Lady Mary was right, she is not fit for the world, nor the world for her—I wish you could see with what delicate courage, what mournful composure, she declines every assistance in the management of the defunct, she has wrapped, the body dressed as she was at the time of her beatification, in a fine sheet, and laid it with the assistance of her own maid only, in the coffin. Will any good creature for love or money undertake to dispose of my weather-beaten body in the same decent manner?

We just hinted the heat of the weather; but she will not hear of embalment, and begs with such earnestness, and adduces such reasons, why the sweet form of irresistible beauty, should not be submitted to the labour of mere operators; that we cannot oppose the opinion of a woman, whose notions are an honor to female delicacy.

We now wait the General's commands, and shall proceed as soon as we receive them—the ladies on their return to Bath, Father Dominick, Reuben, Madame Vallmont, the little waiting girl, and myself to Dover.—

Would I could add any thing in comfort to my friend; had I the power, if my own feelings would permit me I should certainly attempt it; since it was the saying of a very sensible fellow, “that it is the criterion of true manhood to *feel* those impressions of sorrow, it cannot resist, and to *admit* not be *above* consolation.” But alas Madam! very wise things may be said, and wrote, when sorrow is at a distance, it is at present too near us all to add practice to theory.

I have the honor to be, &c.

J. MELROSE.

## LETTER LXXXI.

*Lady Mary Moncrass to Major Melrose.*

Bath.

Dear Sir,

I Can only say it is the General's desire, that every behest of his beloved, and ever regretted niece, be scrupulously observed, and it is also his wish, that Madame De Vallmont be indulged in every request she condescends to make, both with respect to Miss Neville, and herself. I will not add to *your* distress Major, by describing *ours*; my dear Moncrass needs your presence, but we acquiesce in the obligation your humanity confers, and shall ever acknowledge your attention to our lamented relation.

We beg sir, you will in the General's name, settle Madame Vallmont's worldly affairs, in a way that will not, either take her mind from the religious character she means to fill, nor, should she hereafter change her resolution, be a bar to her re-entrance into the world: we inclose unlimited credit on our banker, and Major Melrose will pardon our saying *we* must be the only patrons of Madame Vallmont.

The General bids me tell you, his heart will give you welcome, and need I assure you sir, my gratitude is as lively as my friendship.

I have the honor to be, &c.

M. MONCRASS.

## LETTER LXXXII.

*Lady Mary Moncrass to Simon Brown,  
Steward at Belle-Vue.*

Bath.

Mr. Brown,

IT is our positive commands, that all our servants, dependants and tenants, at Belle-Vue; be furnished with decent mourning; and that the same funeral respect be paid in every particular to the memory of Miss Agnes Neville, niece to General Moncrass, as was shewn to the late Countess, my mother; you are to take particular care to order the bells to toll, and to distribute alms to the poor, in every town, and village through which the hearse passes, in the way to Dover; you are to attend the funeral, accompanied by six of our men servants; Madame Vallmont will do us the honor to use our chaise; and Peggy, Miss Neville's maid will attend her. Madame Vallmont's own servant who we find she has discharged; will accept from me twenty guineas for mourning, and consider herself as under my particular protection; we trust you will be strictly attentive to our commands; the General, and myself, will esteem your future services, as you acquit yourself on this occasion.

M. MONCRASS.

## LETTER LXXXIII.

*Madame Vallmont to Lady Mary Moncrass.*

Convent D——, Paris.

I Avail myself madam, of the opportunity of Major Melrose's return to England; and his polite offer of charging himself with my letter, to address for the last time, any of the inhabitants of the great world; and to take a long farewell of the friends, whom I nevertheless reverence and esteem.

It is not that I would have it believed, *my* grief at the last sad wound to my affections, in the loss of my loved young friend is the mortal stab to my worldly happiness; no Lady Mary: but her spotless mind, and steady adherence to her religious duties; her invariable attachment to the strict tenets of honor and virtue, and her constant aspiration, even when her happiest prospects were opening, after the eternity, where *now*, her unsullied spirit, rejoices in the bosom of the holy virgin; was an example, I thank my gracious God, I *can* want no inducement to follow; while the heaven of heavens, is open to penitent sinners.

Were it possible madam I could ever more stand in need of pecuniary assistance, I should honor *myself*, in accepting an obligation from Lady Mary Moncrass, but it is not: my own little fortune, will more than supply all the wants of a woman, who is disrobed of vanity; that, and myself, I devote to the service of my Redeemer.

I am flattered by your distinction, and grateful for your offered favor; and that my mind now soars above the one, and that I cannot need the other, does not lessen the value of your condescension, and generosity; may you madam, enjoy uninterrupted happiness on earth, and may we meet in an endless eternity.

The worthy Major, intreats me to inform you of the manner, in which the Abbess St. Lawrens received us at her convent: he will not trust his feelings to speak, or write on the subject, to you, or the General; his heart he says, is grief worn, and he fears to add affliction, where he wishes to administer consolation.

The task madam, is less difficult, than may be expected by those who knew not the mind of the departed saint; and who are strangers to Madame St. Lawrens.

Her consent to the espousal, of her beloved Agnes to an heretic; was extorted, by the tenderness of her solicitude, for the happiness of her young friend, with whose fondness, for the wretched Harley, she was perfectly acquainted; yet, it was literally a consent, without approbation.

The temporal happiness of the child of her heart, as far as human foresight could perceive, was secured: in her alliance with Mr. Harley, but, in the arms of an amiable heretic, whom she so well loved, who could vouch for her faith? who could say *that* would remain unshaken?

Messieurs Melrose, and Montford on the part of Harley, and the General on that of his niece, had convinced her of the unobjectionable establishment, and splendid fortune, which would attend her marriage—but those, far from dispelling the apprehensions of the Abbess, encreased them.

She considered them as snares, that might in time, undermine the principles of the religion, on which in the opinion of all good catholics, the salvation of Agnes depended; she was already lost to her, and from the gentleness of her dispositions under the influence of a sensible and beloved husband, was she not in the greatest danger of being also lost to her God?

She had pondered on these reflections, she had wept over their probability, and prayed against their influence, with a fear and anxiety, only to be conceived by those who knew her exalted friendship, and purified love, for St. Clare, and her lovely daughter.

Madame St. Lawrens, can have no doubt about her own future state, the casting off her frail cloathing, is the only change necessary to her salvation: she can scarcely be called an inhabitant of the earth: but this is not enough with those whom she loved in her state of probation; she would soar into immortality.

At this period she received, the (to her) joyful intelligence that Agnes was returning to the convent—eager to recal those vows from man, which she had long wished to offer to God.

The Abbess at this welcome news, called her sisterhood together, by whom she is entirely beloved,—they were no strangers to the anxiety of her mind, they were indeed sharers in it; often had they united their fervent prayers with her's, for the salvation of Agnes; and they now, gladly joined in thankful praise, to the King of kings, for restoring her to *them*—to *himself*.

The unnatural union—the fatal mystery—the procrastinated development: Madame St. Lawrens looked upon as a part of the awful curses, denounced on the children of the wicked: and rejoiced that her Agnes would escape, the further temporal vengeance of an offended God, in her convent; where she impatiently expected her arrival.

But, when the fatal tidings of her distraction, and death reached her, instead of those violent bursts of grief, which from her known fondness for the deceased were expected; all regret for Agnes, was momentarily lost in the consolation of knowing she had not participated in the guilt, and horror which marked the last sad act of her ill-fated

brother: that *anguish*, not despondency; that *grief*, not a want of faith in the mercy of her God, had robb'd her of reason, and ended her life: the saint-like woman in spiritual extacy, prostrated herself at the altar, and while floods of tears streamed from her eyes, adored the Being who had preserved her Agnes from the sin into which the despairing Harley had plunged.

Oh my child! my child! said the pious woman, my own, my beloved Agnes; how well can I spare the few short years of comfort, I fondly hoped to spend in thy society *here*. Rejoice with me my sisters! my friends! we now know for certain we shall see again our dear sister, we no longer fear the power of an heretic, over her immortal soul.

*Rejoice with me* said the holy St. Lawrens—alas! Madam her tears *would* flow—sighs of fond regret *would* rend her heart—and the poignancy of her grief *would* remind her she was yet a mortal: she sunk lifeless into the arms of an attendant nun.

We arrived at the convent soon after her recovery, she was apprised of the dying request of Agnes, and Father Dominick had left us before we entered the gates of Paris, to prepare her for our reception.

Her spirit she confessed, shrunk from the trial. I know said she I ought to feel nothing but pious joy; that I should hail the approach of her remains with thankful gratitude; and such I trust I *do* feel, for the mercy God has shewn my child.—But to think I shall see her *no more*—that the embrace I took when she left my convent, should be *the last*—the *very last*,—that the eyes which looked more than tongue can utter—are *forever* closed—that I shall *no more* see them elevated with piety, or glistening with sensibility—that the heart, where grateful affection for me, was exceeded only by that she owed her Maker, has *ceased to throb*; oh it is too! too much!

The convent bell announced our arrival, she was before pale; a death-like hue overspread her countenance: Let us go Father, let us meet her, as *she* deserved to be met: I no longer *feel* the weakness of mortality—I shall soon be *reunited* to my Agnes.

We passed with the corpse through the church—the grating which separates the choir, and the folding doors of the convent, were on this occasion thrown open; so that as we advanced, we perceived the good Father entering the opposite door, followed by the Lady Abbess and all the nuns, in solemn procession. The Bishop and Priest were standing at the altar.

The seats were crowded with fashionable people, among whom, were the St. Lawrens and de Courci families, who with their suites were in deep mourning; several other people of distinction, indeed most of those who might really be termed so wore black in compliment to them.

The coffin was borne by our attendants to the grating, where it was received on a kind of bier with straps, and carried some paces within by six nuns; who on a motion from the Abbess, then rested it on stools placed for that purpose.

After a solemn pause, occasioned by the involuntary burst of grief which spread like a contagion from Madame St. Lawrens through the whole sisterhood: she advanced towards the coffin, and crossing her breast, cast her streaming eyes to heaven as if to pray for fortitude.

The Major wept aloud—Mr. Moncrass was as much affected, and poor Peggy, push'd out of our party and spreading her arms over the coffin laid her face on it, and took her last leave of her beloved mistress, with torrents of tears.

The Abbess after struggling some time with her emotions, approached, with a look of pensive resignation, still nearer the coffin; and in very intelligible english, and a firm tone of voice; she kneeling thanked the blessed Virgin for restoring the mortal part of her beloved Agnes, to their holy church! her faith unshaken—her principles uncorrupted—and her person undefiled—for the sorrows it had pleased God to inflict on her, she lifted up with elevated looks her soul in thankfulness—whom thou lovest O God said she thou chastenest—it was the rod of thy love, which preserved our Agnes from binding her soul in covenant with an heretic; which preserved *her* from the sin into which *he* fell; and which renders her thus early, a pure and spotless offering to thee. We weep, but thou wilt sanctify our tears; we *now know* our Agnes is in paradise with thee! heavenly Jesus!—Great God we thank thee!

She then arose, and resting her right hand on the coffin waved her left to the gentlemen, with an action inimitably graceful; and bowed her body; while her tears drop'd from her eyes on the marble pavement.

Madame St. Lawrens—the dear corpse of Agnes—the sisterhood—and myself; were then eternally shut in from a sinful world; the grate closed, and forever separated *me*, from friends I *esteem*, but *cannot regret*.

High mass then instantly began in the church, and as soon as it was ended; the nuns returned in procession with the corpse into the private chapel; where we had hourly prayers as well as high mass in the church three days; Agnes was then laid in the vault, where the Lady Abbess herself means to be inter'd.

I grieve Madam to add my fears, that an event, which happen when it may, will fill this convent with grief, is not far distant; St. Clare's death was the menace; but this the blow. The Abbess's health certainly declines, she honors me with her particular favor, we weep over the misfortunes of St. Clare, but she avoids mentioning Agnes.

After the last obsequies were perform'd, the gentlemen sent to request they might be permitted to pay their compliments at our grate, previous to their departure; the Abbess

returned a polite answer to the Major declining *his* visit to *her*, but Moncrass said she, is the son of the bravest of soldiers—the best of men—the brother of St. Clare—the—

Tears stop'd her utterance—her agonies at the mention of Agnes are indescribable: in a few moments she proceeded—Let *him* be instantly admitted; this is the last, sad trial, let him come, while yet I *can* receive him.

The countenance of the young gentleman pourtray'd his feelings, he advanced towards the Abbess with a respectful diffidence: it was in vain she attempted to speak, he knelt on one knee, and pressed her extended hand to his lips.

After several ineffectual efforts to speak, she drew her veil over her face, and putting a shagreen case into his hand motioned for him to withdraw.—

He again with a look of reverence even to devotion kissed her hand; and after this silent but eloquent interview—Madame St. Lawrens sought comfort, as is *her* constant custom when oppressed by the grievous recollection of the fate of her friends, at the feet of her crucifix.

Oh Lady Mary! you should know this woman—yet after all that can be said of her, is it not her highest eulogium, that she formed the mind of Agnes? and is worthy of all the enthusiastic love and reverence that angel bore her?

The case Madam you will be told, for I think you never saw St. Clare or her daughter; contains a most exquisite likeness of each, if I may judge of the former, by the latter; and that of Madame St. Lawrens is I think one of the finest paintings I have seen—The jewels in which they are set, and ornamented, are a proof of the magnificent spirit of the venerable Marchioness St. Lawrens—at whose particular request they were sent to her jeweller's, to be set according to her directions.

I have only one thing now Madam to add, it is in respect to the deed which Father Dominick will deliver to General Moncrass. I enclose a letter \* written by Agnes to Madame St. Lawrens on the subject, when it was executed; which will prove to you, it was her own deliberate act: as long as she retained her senses, I know it was her first wish that her father's *vices*, her mother's *injuries*, and her *own* and her *brother's misfortunes* should be sunk in oblivion.

I perfectly comprehend the nobleness of that spirit, which impels you to make public her affinity to the General, and to pay every possible regard to the memory of St. Clare even at the expence of yourself, and daughter; but consider Lady Mary, both St. Clare and Agnes are now equally above worldly *honor*—and worldly *injuries*. With such a deed in your possession for the future security of your daughter, you who are so sanguine to pay respect to the memory of the deceased, and to fulfill all her other behests,

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will not I trust oppose her in this her *principal one*: but consider Mr. Neville's *villainy* as yet undiscovered; his *wife* as unheard of; and the hapless *Agnes*, as never to have existed.

And should the fatal story ever find its way into the world; I pray it may be through some humane being, who will drop a sympathetic tear to the memory of the dead, and in respect to the living, conceal their names and throw an impenetrable veil over their real characters;

Farewell Madam, after telling you; the General and your Ladyship; his son, and your daughter; the worthy Mrs. Butler her gentle unassuming daughter-in-law, her sensible son, and every person to whom Agnes was dear; have the constant prayers of this convent, what more acceptable can be added from

LEONORA DE VALLMONT.

## LETTER LXXXIV.

*Major Melrose to Madame Vallmont.*

London.

Madam,

THE date of this letter will inform you, I am returned to my own solitary home. You commanded me to write, and tho' I had so little influence over *you*, I am you see a tractable old Grecian, fair words will make me do wonderful things.

I have *breathed*, for I deny its being *living*, three days in my own warm corner; I say to one—go—and he goeth—to another—come—and he cometh—but tho' the poor devils certainly do their best; they neither come, nor go, to please me.

If the whim takes me, I may, with impunity kick all my domestics down stairs; tho' I desire you, and your black veil'd sisterhood will understand, it is a whim that very seldom *does* take me.

Jermyn-street, with my little box in the middle of it, stands exactly as I left it. My black fellow, in conjunction with my honest old house-keeper, pique themselves not a little, on the excellent order of the territories over which they have presided. I do not perceive a cat more, or less, than when I whirl'd out of town, to be present at a fatal ceremony *never* out of my *mind*; yet with all these privileges, comforts, and *so forth*, I find myself in a very scurvy mood.

Were you ever Madam afflicted with the English malady called the vapours or hypo? if not, permit me to recommend it to you, to put up prayers in your convent immediately, that it may be always as effectually separated from you, as him, who is at this moment, groaning most lamentably under its tyranny.

'tis a plaguy thing to feel oneself as Shakespere says, 'Subject to every skiey influence, the sport of every paltry atom,' to owe the ease of one's mind not only to the disposition of one's body, but almost to every thing which surrounds us.

The fact is Madam, I am now, and have been ever since I left Paris, aye and long before I went there; whatever face I might put on the matter, internally wretched: and as it is blowing at this time, a cursed cold easterly wind I could fancy myself surrounded with hobgoblins.

I have wished to write to you every hour, but the chief perogative of the aforesaid malady, is to prevent one from doing, what one has the best mind to; and what indeed, would be most likely to effect a cure; finding however like all other encroachers, the less I

resist, the more potent it grows; I have turned to my secretaire with a firm resolution to be very well, while I am writing to you.

My tablets are before me, your commands I see were. That I should inform you of our arrival in England. Reception at Bath. The General's health. Lady Mary's procedure in respect to the last request of the best of young women, and a few other mem's, all of which I shall come to in time.

We arrived—but what does that signify?—suppose us at the Crescent.

Lady Mary and her daughter met us at the drawing-room door; the emotions of Julia, were a kind hysterical mixture of joy, and grief; she clasped her arms round her husband, rejoiced at his return, then wept for —— but like Madame St. Lawrens, we will resolve *not to name her*.

Lady Mary's low, and graceful curtsy, without speaking, was at once eloquent, and affecting; she extended her hand, and led me in silence, to the General's apartment.

Our friend! my dear Reuben, said she, sinking beside him, on the sofa, and bursting into tears.

Mary, my beloved Mary! said the General, his voice scarcely articulate—he returned my affectionate embrace, and we were all silent.

Lady Mary still wept—*my* eyes were fixed on the carpet—and the General groaned, both from mental and bodily pain.—

Oh Major! said he, after a few moments—had I followed your counsel had I revealed—

Why my dearest Reuben, interrupted Lady Mary, will you give way to these unavailing regrets?

*Unavailing indeed!* repeated he sighing—but it is a debt due to *you*—the concealment—the secrecy I mistakenly thought incumbent on me to observe; my ill judged adherence to a rash promise, which would not have been extorted, had my unhappy sister known its importance to my peace; has been the destruction of *her*, whom it was meant to serve; and it has filled every faculty of my soul, with unutterable grief: oh Major!! what a wreck of all that was lovely in woman, and amiable in man have you seen; how terrible must have been those agonies, which could so totally unhinge a mind, so perfect, so placid as hers.

Major, said Lady Mary, interrupting him again, I dare not leave you together; *your* mind will naturally revert, to the dear, the regretted objects, we have so recently lost; the General is distressingly mindful of every particular, on which it is hurtful for him to dwell; one point only remains to be settled, which requires no discussion.

I shou'd have felt a laudable, an innate gratification, in the public acknowledgment of Miss Neville, as the legal heiress of her father; and have considered, the exposing the covert acts of a libertine, as a *debt due to humanity*; that the *warning*,

and *example*, might at least operate, for the future *benefit* of mankind: but the request of Agnes, the opinion of Madame De Vallmont, have *their due influence*; I give up my *own* wish, to *theirs*; the will of the deceased, shall be punctually complied with.

The General was going to speak, but she pressed her cheek, wet with tears to his; and implored him to suffer the subject to be changed. We have settled my Reuben, said the charming woman! all that is necessary; let us not be so selfish, as to confine our solicitude, to our own concerns the Major looks ill, he has suffered from the fatigue of travelling, as well as from mental disquiet; we must *now* endeavour to give rest to *his mind*, as well as body.

Thus did the amiable Lady Mary, govern the weakness of two lords of the creation; and thus did she, continue to encrease her ascendancy, over her fond husband; by a rational, and unwearied attention, to those sorrows, which notwithstanding all, *still* corrodes in his bosom.

I continued with them eight days, and it was with reluctance, they would then suffer me to depart. But I found myself indisposed, and fancied, that when seated on my own throne, vulgarly called an elbow chair, I should be better; and so I told her ladyship, when notwithstanding all her polite, and friendly invitations, I left them.

But—I no sooner arrived *here*, no sooner mounted my *throne* than my vagrant ideas carried me away to Belle-Vue, I wanted to be reading the most expressive countenance nature ever formed; I languished for the opening of two coral lips, which are *forever closed*; I listened after the sound of a voice, *no more heard*.

I abdicated my throne, and rambled from one apartment, to another; but change of place, had no power over my mind; I remembered the delightful ranges over bricks, stones, and mortar; which very happily engrossed my attention at the Hermitage; the grateful effusions of the heart of him, on whose arm I then hung, recur'd to my memory, and I found, I wanted support, across my own little dressing room. Then came the villainous english malady, which I have for the present routed, by writing to you.

Had you madam, been so generous, as to weigh your own gratification, in your retirement, against the good, your society would have done, the soul of a *very honest fellow*! you would have been now here in person, to chase away this formidable enemy.

I *will* call myself an *honest fellow*, tho' if you were to know the horrors, I am continually a prey to, you would be apt to believe I was haunted by one of the most troublesome, rascals of a conscience, that ever poor sinner was tormented with. But it is a *lying malady*, I repeat it, *I am an honest fellow*! Never drew my sword in cold blood, nor uttered a falsehood with intent to deceive, in my life! never got a dirty shilling, nor turned my back on a friend, or foe in distress! some little flirtation with your bewitching sex, may perhaps rise up in judgment against me; but no seduction, no plots for the corrupting of innocence, no desertion of whatever female, chose to put her trust in me; *once* in my

life, and *but once*; I had a hankering after a pretty little harmless thing, daughter to one of my serjeants; and believe I should have succeeded, but the father was killed in an engagement—the mother broke her heart—the girl became naturally a kind of protegee—and *that* ended the affair—thank God that it *did end so*—what a devil of a hand, would this same English malady make of me, if among the many phantoms it raises to harass me, I beheld *in my mind's eye*, the two murdered mothers, Agnes Moncrass, and Sophia Woodburne, with their respective children.

Gallantry! Libertinism! for I begin to think they are synonymous terms, unfeeling monsters! with what effrontery do they stalk into the first societies in this refined age; *how* boldly spread their destructive snares, how proudly view the conquests which are followed by shame, despair and death; and how unblushing hear the story of those innocents, who are every day discovered, to be their victims!

Oh Madam! now that the calamities I have witnessed in our small circle, carries my mind yet farther into the consequences of this vice; I actually tremble!

While a man of the world pursues a common act of gallantry which in *his* estimation, is a mere bagatelle how may not delicacy, honor, and even human nature, be wounded: what actions abhorrent to God, and unsuspected by man, may he not himself commit, and entail on his posterity.

How many titles, gained by the manly exertions of some brave loyalist. How many hereditary estates, purchased with the blood and life of some antient progenitor fall to the offspring of intrigue! while the real heir of a noble family, and large estates, with all the fire, high spirit, and fine sentiments of his race; feels his innate worth, cramp'd within the narrow powers of a portionless younger brother.

How many respectable fathers, feel the shame of a seduced daughter, glow on their burning cheeks! while conscience perhaps, pleads the *great*, and *just* law of retribution! If indignant honor triumph over paternal affection, and he spurns her from him, *who* will protect *her*, who is abandoned by her *own father*?

But if tenderness prove stronger than resentment, he sinks under the sorrow she inflicts, and feels a dagger in the commiseration she excites.

How many noble matrons, whose lives have pass'd in the amiable, the celestial duties of a virtuous wife, a tender mother, retreat in anguish from observation; and deluges her private apartment with tears, wrung from her unspotted soul, by the weakness and folly, of *that daughter*, whose beauty, elegance, and sparkling wit, was *once* her *proud boast*.

How many of the less valuable mothers, conceal, in inexorable resentment, the internal reproaches of her own heart, for the unguarded example, careless instruction, and neglected education, *she* has given her ill taught daughter. Amid the disappointment of

hopes, the pity of friends, and the scorn of enemies; amidst the bitterest of all evils, the self-reproach of a bad parent, is the greatest.

And can we madam refuse the sigh of regret, the tear of pity to the thousands of beautiful faces, *now* deprived of their first grace, *modesty!* whom we meet among all ranks, and description of people. The same eyes sparkle in the side box to-day, that offend our senses on a dung-hill to-morrow. The day opens on their innocence, health, and peace, it closes on their infamy, disease, and desperation, yet they were all once innocent, designed by heaven for the *ornament*, but rendered by *man*, the *pest* of society.

In the rising generation, God defend us Madam! what an instance has the fate of our poor young friends afforded, of the unnatural unions, the scenes of abomination, which *may* be, and undoubtedly daily *are*, the consequences of that indiscriminate freedom of manners, that disgrace the present age.

Oh to stretch invention, to search the east for a jewel, to crown the ingenuity of that being, who should invent a means of preventing an evil so growing, so contagious.

Should the sad tale we have witnessed, be ever known to the world; should it speak to the heart of one of the many Neville's, who flutter round the young and gay; should it hold a mirror to his heart, and persuade one libertine to abandon his triumph, e'er it is complete; *Edward* nor *Agnes* will have died in *vain*.

I had written so far, when wanting heart to conclude, I gave myself up to my sworn enemy: I ate without appetite, drank without goût, and after numberless efforts, slept without resting, and so fine a day.

I have been so long used to converse with people of *your sort* Madam, that I could not bear to level myself at once to the common run of how d'ye's, who have done their best towards wearing out the knocker of my door. But yesterday a pretty modest rap, given by a servant who seemed to know the master of the house was, but *ill at ease*, was followed by the entrance of a lady, her nurse, and a fine little boy, named Edward Harley.

Mrs. Butler heard I was in town, and indisposed. Poor girl! she has little of that Hebe I carried to Belle-View; left in her own countenance.

Her tears did not flow, but gradually filled her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks.

She called me her *brother's friend!* and pointed to my observation, the features of her boy, which she *would* persuade me, resembled *his*.

She said I was too much alone—and shewed me a letter from Mrs. Dowager Butler, replete with good sense, in which, among other things, she desired her daughter would prevail on me to escort her to Mr. Montford's; where Mr. Butler, and herself were to meet us; and while away the dismal months, of November, and December.

Mr. Montford, said Mrs. Butler, the tears still rolling down her cheeks, begs you will honor him with your company. He is a plain man, but what he wants in elegance, he will make up in real goodness of heart. His house is within twenty miles of Bath; the

General's family make frequent excursions there. My mother is never what is termed very merry, but then neither is she ever sad, the philanthropy of her disposition, renders her anxious to impart the happy equality of her own mind, to her friends, and in this amiable endeavour she is often successful.

We cannot promise to be gay, but I hope we shall in time be chearful; our party will be happier, and our hearts improved, by the society of Major Melrose; my little Edward will steal into his heart, and his mother will merit his commendation, by teaching her son the simple graces of his unfortunate namesake.

Well Madam, I have suffer'd myself to be coaxed by this good-hearted girl, again to leave my own throne; and I am going to Montford's, where I perhaps may recover some degree of chearfulness, but as to gaiety, a distinction Mrs. Butler very properly made—

“Save me from the gaiety of those  
 “Whose head-achs nail them to a noontide bed;  
 “And save me from those whose haggard eyes  
 “Flash desperation and betray their pangs  
 “For property stript off by cruel chance,  
 “From gaiety that fill the bones with pain,  
 “The mouth with blasphemy, the heart with woe.”

Adieu Madam, may you enjoy a double portion of that happiness of which your obstinacy deprives him who will nevertheless always think of you with esteem and affection.

J. MELROSE.

FINIS.