

THE
OFFSPRING
OF
FANCY,
A NOVEL.

By A LADY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE
OFFSPRING
OF
FANCY.

LETTER I.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

THOUGH you have not kept your word with me, of writing the moment you arrived at Frogly Farm, I will only chide you by my eagerness to prove the largest share of sisterly affection.—I had a pious visit this morning from your excellent pastor, who is come up to this wicked town once more, to initiate his son Charles into the study of the mysteries of the law, and to fix him in chambers to his own liking; that is to say, with windows to let in the morning sun, and a ventilator to expel all noxious vapours, and circulate a sufficient quantity of fresh air to preserve the bloom which he carried from Frogly to Cambridge, and has ever since, by his temperance and sobriety, preserved, in spite of bad example, and the prevalence of custom upon youthful minds.—This is the good doctor's account of himself, his son, and his present journey to London.—He tells me that Sophia is as grave, Eliza as gay, and Henrietta as beautiful, as when I saw them with you last summer;—that you and your Corydon are, as usual, the delight of the village, the envy of your rich neighbours, and the parents, friends, and guardian-angels of the poor.—And, as an excuse for my present propensity to write to my dear Charlotte, he told me, that you had begged he would appologize to me for your laziness, by the disorder in which you found your dairy, store-room, &c. at your return, and the necessary fatigues of setting them to rights again.—Now, though I always give just as much credit (and no more) as I think proper to all excuses of this nature; yet, as we are always apt to believe what flatters ourselves, I give you this notice, that I shall at times be content with three lines, provided you are punctual in point of time;—do but begin with a *dear* sister, and conclude with an *affectionate* one;—give me leave to congratulate you upon an agreeable cause, or condole with you upon a sad one, such as the tooth-ach—the visit of an old-maid—or some misfortune of equal magnitude; in short, do but allow me to use *my* pen, and (as I know it suits your humour best) I will allow you to *spare* yours.

I am at present engaged in a very important service; Lady Frances Montford and I are going to the next masquerade.—She is a good little woman; but apt to be saucy enough—She fancies nobody can have taste without a title. Now (you know I love argument dearly) I am determined to convince her that she is mistaken:— not but it is a very clear case to me, that nature meant *me* for a dutchess, only fortune made a

trifling mistake, and in *her* calculation set me down for plain Mrs. ———. Now do I see a cloud gathering upon your brow; but I will avert the threatening storm, by confessing the superior happiness of my lot. We must not always be wife, my dear; for, however humiliating to human nature, it must be owned, that her greatest favourites now and then indulge in an hour of folly.—Yet, as I know the almost perfect goodness of your disposition, I am always afraid of trifling, unless I atone for a dozen lines of levity, by at least as many more of a contrary nature. For the present, however, you must excuse me; my mind is in an uncommon state of ease and pleasantry;—indeed, blessed in such a husband, who lives but in and for me—blessed with three such little cherubs as almost mock infirmity, and laugh disease to scorn—surrounded by all the sweets of plenty, and happy (if I do not flatter myself) in the esteem of all whom I converse with, what should make me serious—except the fear of losing these blessings? That is a thought I dare not indulge—and why indeed should I indulge it? The bounteous Giver meant them for blessings; as such I will enjoy them, nor impiously anticipate a misery, he may not intend to inflict; for according to our favourite Pope, “to enjoy, is to obey:” yet sometimes I think upon this subject, till thoughts grow terrible. Duelling is become a fashion as general as powder; and Mr. Clement has a sense of what the men call honor; which is to me a perpetual monitor that no man can be perfect: else, had my Charles, who is in every other respect a christian, been tainted with such impiety? My children too, are beautiful; he who formed them, best knows how exquisitely beautiful!—yet, may the small-pox come, and in an hour destroy that fountain of maternal delight.—Then, as to fortune, the last and least article of my happiness, *that*, in a situation like Mr. Clement’s, is always fluctuating; but that I think not of; for though your flowery lawns and purling streams may be the properest scences for romance, as a wife and a mother, I think, I can match your extremest heroism: in short, I am thoroughly convinced, that were I destitute of all the superfluities, nay, almost of the comforts of life, possessing, as I do, such homefelt endearing blessings, in the undivided heart of my husband, and the seraphic smiles of my children, I could, with the firmness of a Roman matron, smile at misfortune, and defy pecuniary distress.—I was interrupted, my dear, by a note from my sweet friend in Dover-Street. She is not well; and begs that we will come and play an innocent pool with her this evening. She keeps her room, it says; and yet she asks Mr. Clement;—that’s odd! But she is above the little pruderies of narrow minds; her soul is not of the common size; but, like her form, speaks her of a species distinct and separate from the crowd. How beautiful she must look in an undress!—It is well I am sure of my husband:—but perhaps he may not go. I have sent the note down to the compting-house: he sends me word that he hates cards; and, Selby says, looks as if he was angry. Why should he be angry? Something in his business perhaps.—He is coming up. Charlotte, did you ever see your husband out of humour, and could not tell why?—There was nothing in Mrs. Belmour’s note to offend him; and yet he would neither go, nor tell me why he refused; so I ordered the coach, and am going by myself. Adieu!

Friday morn.

I never spent so uneasy an evening as yesterday, though it was with a friend, who, next to my dear Charlotte, I love and esteem beyond all the women in the world! About ten o’clock Mr. Clement called at the door; and, notwithstanding our joint entreaties to come up stairs, sullenly refused; and said, “He would wait Mrs. Clement’s

leisure." I hurried down; and, with all the pleasantry I could assume, endeavoured to introduce a conversation as foreign to the subject as possible; which seemed to me the best way of consigning the unpleasant occurrences of the day to oblivion:—it succeeded; and we have been ever since upon the happiest terms; nor should I, perhaps, have recollected the circumstance, but that I thought I owed the communication to you.—Give me your thoughts upon the whole matter, my dear; for still I recur to my first proposition, why should that gloom take possession of Mr. Clement, because a sweet woman, who loves us both, invited us to spend a social evening in her sick room? I must add, that I thought she seemed hurt at his refusal to come up when he called at night. Whether she thought it a display of his delicacy, and a *tacit* reproach of *hers*—or whether she thought it a symptom of his displeasure to me, I know not.—I am sure she loves me—tenderly loves me; nor could I bear society, if ever I should have cause to doubt it.——Mr. Clement reminds me that we dine at the other end of the town; and Selby, that I have but an hour to dress.

Adieu, my dear Charlotte! may your domestic happiness be as lasting as those virtues upon which it is founded are conspicuous!

Your affectionate sister,

MARIANNE.

LETTER II.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

Frogly Farm.

MY DEAR SISTER,

TO convince you how absolute your commands, and how dear all your interests are to your Charlotte, I lose not a moment in giving you my thoughts upon the contents of your last letter: you know me, slow to admire, and slow to censure. Would to heaven your open unsuspecting heart were as cool in *making* friendships, as susceptible of the miseries which ill-placed ones may produce!—In a word, I never liked your Mrs. Belmour.—Forgive me, my dear, nor start at my assertion—a female friend, a very attracting one too, is to a married woman, a dangerous possession.—Nay, I will go yet farther, and say, that a married woman who admits no friend but her husband, takes the most prudent and likely road to happiness—yet, bound as *we* are, by every natural tie, to share each other's happiness or misery, it would be making duties clash (which he who formed them never intended) to carry our reserve to the exclusion of a sister's participation.—You know, my dear, what cause I have to love and reverence your husband.—I know the goodness of his heart, for I have been in some degree an object of it; yet the warmth and sanguinity of his constitution is a sufficient reason why you should, as I often told you, be very much guarded in your choice of acquaintance; not that I would wish to insinuate an idea, to the injury of either your husband or your sweet friend as you call her: I believe her, in the *last* degree, virtuous; and I think her pride and her good understanding will be powerful incentives to her to remain so; but, my dear, she loves admiration, and does *not* love her husband.—I have seen you forget yourself in a large company, and see *only* her—what if your husband should discover as many charms in her as you do, can you blame him for following your example? Hitherto, I believe, you have no cause to suspect his fidelity—let me conjure you to make a timely retreat from the post of danger, where you so often place him and yourself: he is a good man, an amiable man—but remember he *is* a man—and when you reflect upon the licence, which education, custom and the example of those we live with, give to all the sex, you will be convinced that the best way to victory is to draw him off from an engagement.—Perhaps, by the time you read this, you will have forgotten the subject—your mind is capable of strong and quick impressions; but the superior generosity of your heart makes you ever the easy prey of artifice and dissimulation—and since I am upon the topick, I will just hint, that if you could easily replace Selby, I think your domestic tranquillity might be insured from the worst source of disquiet, that of a bosom snake who creeps close but to sting you.—I find my mind in a severer tone than usual; and as it will probably discourse nothing now but discordant musick, I will break off for the present.—Mr. Bellas joins his sincerest wishes for every earthly happiness to you and yours, with those of your truly affectionate sister,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER III.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

HA! ha! ha! my sweet, severe, sentimental, sister! why, Charlotte, you rail like an old maid at a wedding. How is it possible for so good a woman to be so uncharitable? I could hardly forbear reading your letter aloud:—I received it in the most critical situation imaginable—we were seated a *partie quarrée* in my little blue room—Mr. and Mrs. Belmour, Mr. Clement and I—the cards were but just dealt—Mrs. Belmour passed, whilst I broke the seal—Mr. Clement doubted a moment, whilst I cast my eye over the first line; then said, he would do the same—good-manners obliged me to look at my cards; when behold! A sansprendre vole!—Oh Charlotte, how flattering every symptom of good fortune attributed to those we love! During the next deal I read the remainder of your exhortation, I must call it.—I cast my eye insensibly on the sweet subject of your severity—she hoped Mrs. Bellas was well? I acquiesced—Mr. Bellas too?—I believed so—enquired whether you had done her the honor to mention her?—There, Charlotte—what return could I make to that? I believed I looked very silly, for I am a miserable *Bon Tonist*—I cannot lye with a good grace—I did lie however, and so pursued spadille.—We rang the changes upon the four aces till eleven o'clock, when the servant announced Mr. Belmour's carriage.—He rose; she was not well, and yet did not seem disposed to go—so the cold chicken was laid, and we enjoyed another hour's chat—I was disappointed of going to the last masquerade by lady Frances, being seized with an ulcerated sore-throat the evening before.—However, on Monday next, we go with an encreased party. Mr. and Mrs. Belmour—a Mr. Deacon, who visits them, and a Mrs. Colville, a sprightly elegant West Indian widow, who always puts me in mind of *Sterne's Brunette* in *The Sentimental Journey*—I have racked my invention to make dresses for the whole set—and have left myself no time to make up any thing, but shall go in a man's domino, as will the lovely Creole—indeed that is the *Ton* at present.—I have at last finished the rest of the groupe—Mr. Belmour goes as *Lusignan*, Mr. Deacon as *Osman*, and Mrs. Belmour as *Zara*. Now don't you be scandalous—Mr. Deacon and Mr. Belmour are intimate as brothers—the latter you know; his greatest merit is the just value he sets upon his wife—his greatest misfortune, having married her so young, that she was not sufficiently acquainted with her own heart to know she could not bestow it upon him.—And yet how amiably does she conduct herself! how sweetly, how meritoriously, make duty alone supply the place of every united tie that you and I have to bind us to our husbands! My dear good sister, “be not righteous over-much;” cease to think ill of a woman, who, in a situation so unfavourable, has deserved, through twelve or fourteen years of penance, the approbation of the world. As to Selby, I think you are right—and I will part with her as soon as I can do it prudently—indeed I have often been sorry I did not take your advice when I married, and avail myself of Mr. Clement's offer, to discharge all the servants that were prior to my time; yet my heart forbad me to deprive seven honest creatures of so good a master, for no other reason than that I had got so good a husband. However, I do not like Selby's manner of late; she seems disposed to make trifles of consequence, and sometimes speaks of her master with a freedom which I do not take myself.—True, it seems the result of her attachment to me; so far I should forgive her—yet he has deserved more of her than I have; therefore, if she had a grateful heart, he would be her first object.—I have, at her desire, and from a principle of economy, had her

taught to dress my hair; and, really, I may be mistaken, but I think she has never been the same creature since—besides, I have within these two days been greatly offended at the liberties I find she has taken in the nursery, I will not suffer my children to be injured by my partiality, but I will be the judge of their faults and their punishments.

MARIANNE.

LETTER IV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

THOUGH I foresaw the reception my admonitions would meet with, if they happened to obtrude themselves upon an hour of mirth; yet the pleasure I feel at your momentary enjoyments, every one of which I share, cannot entirely quiet my apprehensions for your future disappointment in those upon whom you have placed your hopes of lasting happiness. However, I will not visit you with the bodings of the raven, whose tidings, however true, are never welcome—my duty, as well as my affection, called upon me to warn you of your danger.—I have obeyed, and now shall wait *your* time of renewing the subject—my prayers are constantly offered up for your preservation—if they are heard, I have nothing left to desire—or should any misfortune befall, I shall always as sincerely sympathize in your painful feelings, as I now participate in your delights.—We were much concerned yesterday evening by a message from the parsonage-house; the worthy possessor was taken ill on Sunday after service; probably he caught cold, for it rained a good deal, and he would not suffer us to turn our horses east of the church to set him down, lest I should be frightened at turning in the lane, which you know is narrow and uneven—poor man! I am afraid his delicacy will be fatal to him.—Mr. Bellas ran down to his house with the messenger, and found him sitting in the porchway, eagerly imbibing the refreshment of the air; but, upon feeling his pulse, he found him so feverish, that he persuaded him to go to bed, and take some slop to promote perspiration.—This morning he went again, and, finding him much worse, prevailed upon him to take a few grains of James's Powders, which he had carried for that purpose.—Philip is just returned—and the poor doctor in the most alarming situation.—Lord have mercy upon the poor girls if they lose him!—Sophia has never been a-bed since he first complained, the good girl will certainly kill herself; youth cannot bear the fatigue which custom and repeated trials make easy to some persons more advanced in life.—I have been asking permission of Mr. Bellas to send Collins to sit up to-night—she has been used to a sick room, and has great veneration for the doctor.—I think if you were to send for Charles, and desire him to come down to Frogly, the sight of a son so beloved would smooth the good old man's pillow—he must be obliged, and perhaps restored by it; at least it can do no harm.—Adieu! my dear Marianne! Bless the sweet prattlers in their aunt's name, and believe me ever thine most truly,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER V.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

THE moment I read your melancholy description of the parsonage-house, I sent to Charles Mason, and desired he would eat a bit of mutton with us at four o'clock, as I had something to say to him from you.—Mean time, Mr. Clement, who was apprehensive his finances might not be in the best condition, proposed taking that opportunity of carrying me to visit my dear sister, and transporting Charles without expence or delay to his father.—I am almost ashamed to give you the true reason, and yet I cannot impose upon you by pretending any other, for my rejecting an offer so kind. But this is the day for which our masquerade-party has been made for these three weeks;—and I have had so many ambassadors from the different personages who compose it, and answered all in the affirmative; that I cannot now change my plan, without the humiliating circumstance of giving a reason to each of them, and perhaps having the mortification of finding it refused credit; for so much does a town-life take off from the social feelings of hearts like my Charlotte's, that it would seem incomprehensible to ninety-nine out of every hundred of those with whom I am just going to mix for the night, that the death of an old man, however worthy, and the dissolution of an amiable family, however happy, should be of sufficient consequence to keep a being no way connected but by the general tie of humanity from the dear delights of "Do you know me?"—Give me leave, however, my dear Charlotte, to blunt the edge of your reproaches, by assuring you, that my heart is busy in the right place, notwithstanding the appearance of an insensibility which I abhor. Should it be the will of Providence to take the good old man, I know Mr. Bellas and you will have some plan for disposing of the girls.—Command me for a year's pocket-money;—it is but dressing my own hair, and avoiding a superfluous plume of feathers.—Dinner is on the table; and I think Charles has just knocked at the door: I will contrive some method of conveying him to Frogly.—We have a couple of horses, which you have promised to turn out with yours into the long meadow:—I will have them put to the travelling chaise, which we shall not want till it can by some other means be sent back again. Fill the little private packet with an account of yourself and your good man.—The dinner waits; adieu!

Monday even.

A circumstance has occurred, my dear, which I cannot conceal from you, though I know it will give you concern:—poor Charles Mason has fallen into some of those snares with which London abounds for youths, who, like him, have been deprived of the most useful of all studies, that of human nature. His father certainly meant well to all his children in the extreme retirement to which he accustomed them; and, with respect to his daughters, it may do very well; but boys should, in my opinion, have an education as different as their habits.—Poor Charles, unconscious of guile in himself, and untaught to expect it in others, made one in a party on Monday sevensnight to Ranelagh.—A lady, of the Millwood kind, struck with the bloom which the poor old man was so proud of, watched his departure; and, having wrote with her

pencil an enraptured billet-doux, contrived to place her confidant in the lobby, who slipped it into his hand unseen by any of his companions, from whom he immediately contrived to separate, and hurried to the place of assignation, which was the upper end of the canal, under a kind of alcove, which was erected for a night of illumination;—the poor fellow has given Mr. Clement such an artless account of their meeting, and the consequent circumstances, as would, he says, disarm even *your* virtue in the relation;—but unluckily a jealous old gentleman, who had, it seems, a prior property in the lady, by an unexpected visit, has discovered the amour, and the turtles (Charles having sold all his moveables to raise money) are this very hour, perhaps, setting out for Dover.—When I know more, you shall; mean time, write to

Your affectionate

MARIANNE.

LETTER VI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

OH, my dear Marianne, the worthy good old man is gone to everlasting rest! and poor Sophia, as I expected, has taken to her bed; where, oppressed with the heavy weight of filial sorrow, she sinks under the symptoms of an approaching fever.—Eliza and Henrietta are at my house, under the care of Collins; and, should poor Sophia recover, I intend that she shall join them till some method of placing them out happily can be adopted.—Eliza's lively turn seems to ward off misfortune; but the gentle, lovely, little, Henrietta is more affected than I could have supposed seven years old capable of.—If Charles be not set out, hurry him down; for though he can now administer no comfort to his father, I suppose he would wish to see him decently interred, for his own sake.—I have this moment received your letter. Good heavens! what an unfortunate occurrence!—Unhappy Charles, at such a time to be absent, and upon such an occasion; I suppose it will be in vain to defer the funeral now on his account, so we may as well give the orders immediately.—I will carry your letter to Mr. Bellas; though, for the poor girls sakes, I had rather not be the messenger of such news.—Yet there can be no apology for his not coming down but the true one. Make my acknowledgments to my brother for his kind intentions towards me; he knows how welcome such a visit would have been:—nor can I forgive you for declining it in favour of an amusement which I know your good sense must hold in contempt, unless you atone for it by giving me the comfort of your company at an approaching critical period. I am sometimes very silly in my *bodings* upon this occasion; but I dare not let them appear, they make my poor Frank so wretched.—Remember me kindly to my brother and the little ones; and be assured of the daily prayers of

Your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER VII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I CAN now give you the whole history of Charles; prepare for a melancholy catastrophe, and soften the concern which it will give you, by recollecting that the good old man, whose heart-strings it must have torn, is happily released in time to escape the knowledge of it.—Whilst I was stolen up into my dressing-room, to finish my last letter to you, Mr. Clement, who saw the matter in a less serious light than I could have supposed, yet thought it of consequence enough to wish to reason the unthinking boy into a resolution to pursue it no farther:—with this design he went again to the Paper-buildings, where, as he guessed, he found Charles still in conference with the broker, to whom he had made a sale of not only his furniture, but even his books, globes, and a part of his linen, for about seventy pounds.—The broker, it seems, was not able immediately to muster the money; and Charles's situation did not admit of giving credit.—Mr. Clement offered the broker ten pounds for his bargain; which, for some time, he refused; till, upon remonstrating with him upon the advantage he must have taken of the young man's situation, and something like a hint of legal redress, he consented, and, pocketing the bank note, left the chambers *in statu quo*, and the gentlemen to their *tête à tête*.—Charles, who very properly considered Mr. Clement's behaviour as a severe though delicate reproof, was prevented by an ingenuous shame from interposing whilst the broker staid:—the moment he was gone, he burst into tears; and, taking Mr. Clement by the hand, he sobbed out, "Oh, Sir, you have meant to save me; but I am only rendered more miserable—more, by an unavoidable necessity, undone:—before, I should only have ruined myself; now I must add to my own misery that of an unfortunate woman, whose only crime has been an affection unworthily placed upon me." Mr. Clement, who attributed all this eulogium upon the lady to Charles's simplicity and want of knowledge of the world, chose to let the effusion exhaust itself before he applied the styptick which he went on purpose to administer;—at last, when reason seemed to stand a little chance, passion having had ample scope, Mr. Clement observed, that the lady, from the best intelligence he could collect, was in no material degree worse than when they met;—that, if she had lost the friendship of one gentleman, she had still charms enough to attract another;—that the affection she had bestowed upon Charles, however flattering, was not of such a value as required his utter ruin for the payment;—that those epithets which he had so liberally applied to himself, were in fact applicable only to her *first seducer*. Here he could no longer contain himself—he fell into an agony of passion, and cried, "I am, I am that monster!" Mr. Clement, who really thought his brain turned, was at a loss what argument next to apply, when the lady (with her maid, both in mourning) broke into the room; and, upon seeing Mr. Clement, instantly fainted away!—Charles, who was now entirely off his guard, tearing his hair, and throwing himself at her feet, cried, "Look up, look up, my injured, lovely, lost Amelia; 'tis thy husband calls, the husband of thy soul!—we are met, for the last time—never to part again;—nor law, nor gospel, nor Merisford himself, that usurper of my rights, that tyrant, that lord of thy alienated hand, shall ever force thee from my arms."—She opened her eyes, and, seeing Mr. Clement fixed

in astonishment at Charles's exclamations, screamed out, "My uncle!" and fainted again. Mr. Clement, who, never having seen her since she was quite an infant, did not know her person, the moment she spoke recognized the voice of a sister whom he loved with the tenderest affection; but who, having married when my Charles was a child, a very bad kind of man, who delighted in making his family miserable, was, by that means, for many years before her death, alienated from her family.—You can conceive the situation into which this discovery threw the whole party, particularly Mr. Clement; who, having gone, in the warmth of a disinterested friendship, to rescue a man from the snares of a wanton, found in that man the avowed seducer of his niece;—her beauty, her distress, and her apparent sensibility, however, disarmed his rage; besides, the hints that had dropped of her having an husband, and he being stiled a tyrant and an usurper, together with the proper sense which Charles had of his guilt towards the unhappy lady, even whilst Mr. Clement (mysterious Providence! her own uncle!) was endeavouring to throw her into a light the most contemptible—all these considerations induced him to think, there might be some circumstances of extenuation. He therefore resolved to be calm till he had heard the different stories of the unfortunate pair. Having said as many extravagant things as the situation will allow you to conceive; and the unhappy lady having a third time fainted, and as often recovered; the distracted young man turned to Mr. Clement, and, baring his bosom with one hand, and offering a sword which had hung against his library with the other, he cried, "Take, Sir, I beseech you, a life which my crimes have forfeited; and which the loss of my Amelia has made a burden to me;—I lived but in hopes to die *with* her; let me die *for* her, and death will be doubly welcome!"—Shame and distress kept her silent; but her looks spoke unutterable things:—she knelt, she clasped her hands, she wept, she did every thing but speak; but when her uncle took the sword, she threw her arms round Charles, and, turning her sweet expressive eyes over her shoulder, she murmured out, in broken accents, "Oh, Sir, be not just by halves!—I am most guilty; for pity's sake, let me in death find the only refuge that can hide me from a husband's reproaches;—brutal as he is, I owed him duty, though I promised him not love." Mr. Clement, who took the sword only to sheath it, bad her be composed, and follow him;—she obeyed—I am interrupted—the rest to-morrow.

MARIANNE.

LETTER VIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS,

in continuation.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

BUT that I am bound by promise, and that promise made to you—I do not know what consideration could enable me to go on with the dreadful task. I bad you prepare for a melancholy catastrophe: good heavens! I did not foresee how very melancholy. I left off, yesterday, with Amelia's consent to come home with her uncle: they arrived in a hackney-coach about seven o'clock; and found us, that is to say, Mr. and Mrs. Belmour, Mr. Deacon, Mrs. Colville, and I, at tea, and in expectation of lady Frances, who was to call about eight, to proceed towards Soho, but in our way to stop at three

or four houses which were open for the reception of masks. Mr. Clement came into the room, with a very expressive countenance; and, in answer to the reiteration of "What, not dressed yet!" said, coolly, "He hoped they would excuse him, as something of moment had happened in his family, which had untuned his mind for amusement."—I started at the word *family*, and, running out of the room, flew up to the nursery; finding all well there, I was coming down stairs with gratitude to heaven, and rather angry in my own mind with Mr. Clement for making an apology for what perhaps he had no mind to, at the expence of truth: he met me at the door of my dressing room; and as he laid one hand to the lock, he took mine with the other; and said, with much concern in his looks, "Don't be alarmed, Marianne; I must introduce an unfortunate relation to you;—she will find employment for that humanity which ever accompanies true and unaffected virtue."—With these words he opened the door, and the most beautiful creature I ever beheld threw herself at my feet; and, hiding her face in my domino, cried, "Dear Sir, what need of the comparison? my own crimes are black enough, without the contrast of my aunt's virtue!"—I raised her, and bad her be comforted; told her, "I hoped her distress aggravated errors into crimes; but that whatever she had been guilty of, as she had obtained her uncle's forgiveness, she had no reason to despair of mine." She looked up with a degree of astonishment mingled with thanks; and, upon my sitting down on the sofa where I had placed her, she leaned upon my shoulder with the familiarity of a long friendship, and said, "Oh that all women who enjoy the happy consciousness of unsullied chastity would add, as you do, the social virtue of generous charity!—could I have hoped for a refuge here but two years since, what guilt, what misery, had I avoided!—but my inhuman father"—here tears choaked her; and Mr. Clement, who had been obliged to fly from the scene as soon as he introduced me, returned to tell me that lady Frances was come, and all the party waiting:—I said at first that I would not go: but, as we could not find a proper apology for turning our friends out of our house without one of us to accompany them, and that we were not able to decide immediately how far, and under what restrictions, we should mention the unhappy circumstance, there was no alternative.—You will guess with how untoward a disposition for mirth I joined the masquing party: it was well I attempted no character, for it would have been miserably supported. About ten we arrived at Soho, having exhibited ourselves at lady Shelburn's and one or two more houses in our way: the rooms were very full, and there was a great number of well-dressed characters; but my heart was so full of the scene I had left Mr. Clement engaged in, that I could not even assume spirits. Mrs. Belmour was infected with my melancholy; and having droped a hint as if she apprehended some impending misfortune to Mr. Clement's affairs, I thought myself obliged to remove that idea, by an indirect promise to let her into the secret when we were next alone:—about four o'clock I begged permission to go home; indeed, the single circumstance of being in such a place, without my husband was a sufficient reason for my uneasiness. I was sorry to break up a party that seemed so happy; and yet so apt are we to judge for others from our own feelings, that I could not help wondering at Mrs. Belmour and Mrs. Colville, who are both women of sense, being so entertained with the flimsy stuff of every masquerader's brain.—Lady Bridget T—— and her two sisters were in the characters of nuns: they did not seem to have any ideas to support the appearance; but they looked handsome, and that was a sufficient reason for the choice.—About five I got home, and had undressed myself before I discovered that Mr. Clement was not in bed—I did not chuse to say much, because, as I have before observed, Selby seems well inclined to make me displeas-

with my husband—yet I could not so far conquer the woman in my heart, as to suppress my enquiries—Selby, how long has your master been a-bed?—She smiled—Ma'am, he is not a-bed at all—Where is he then?—I believe, Ma'am, he is *now* in his study. The *now* was so emphatical, that I asked how long he had left the parlour?—Ma'am, he has never been lower than your dressing-room since you went abroad.—I hope he has not been too severe with his niece—is she a-bed, pray?—Oh yes, Ma'am, the young lady has been in her bed-chamber ever since the sheets were laid on. I asked her, whether I should undress her. She thanked me, but she had rather be alone.—She is really vastly pretty, Ma'am—I wonder who she is in mourning for. Lord help us! we have all cause to mourn for our sins, though to be sure some sins are greater than others.—I could bear no more—but told her to leave the room, and inform her master that I was in bed.—She returned in five minutes—her master's compliments, and, as he had neglected his letters in the evening, he had taken that opportunity of preparing them for the next day's post—that he would not disturb me, as I must be fatigued, but take an hour's rest on the sofa, and then ride out an hour or two before breakfast. —The malicious creature smiled as she delivered the message.—I was distracted with a thousand apprehensions—was it possible that he was displeased with me for going?—no, for he thought it eligible—did he expect me to seek him myself, before I went to-bed? I wished a thousand times I had.—Was it possible that he should have imposed an infamous creature upon me for his niece? and what intention could he have in such imposition? With these interrogatories I amused myself till about eight o'clock, without ever closing my eyes; when I heard a foot going softly towards my table. I pulled back the curtain, and seeing Mr. Clement, who had stolen-in to get my powder, to put a little in his hair, and would not trust any of the other servants, Selby being gone to-bed, lest they should disturb me—I started out of bed, and, seizing his hand, burst into tears—Is my dear Charles angry? was all I could say.—He seemed greatly affected, and took infinite pains to explain the reason why he did not come to-bed, which seemed to me to originate with Selby.—What a vile creature she must be! I see every hour fresh proofs of it.—He would fain have persuaded me to try to sleep; but I had banished sleep by my anxiety, and my eagerness to be instructed upon the subject of the unhappy discovery; so I got up and dressed myself, whilst he gave me the relation, which I have with pain transcribed for you, and yet the worst is to come.—As soon as I was dressed, I knocked at the door of Amelia's room, which she immediately opened.—I told her, that as I should be happy to make her situation as bearable as possible, I would breakfast in her room, if she preferred it to coming down stairs; and that, at my request, her uncle would avoid seeing her, till something could be thought of for her relief; yet that, as hitherto we had only hints and innuendoes to judge of, it would be necessary for her to instruct us candidly, and thoroughly, upon the subject of her misfortunes.—She blushed, and begged that I would add to the tenderness I had so recently exerted towards her, by giving her all the information I could of the unhappy partner of her misery—assured me, that her own sufferings she was resigned to—that she thought them just—and, were she enabled to hope that he had a sufficient power over himself to be reconciled to life without her, she should welcome death in whatever shape it came; and, mean time, if her uncle thought proper, she would return to her husband, whom, whatever appearances were against her, she had never wronged—but that, if we would spare her the pain of a personal recital, she would commit to paper her melancholy story, and then rest entirely at our disposal.

MARIANNE.

LETTER IX.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

I HAVE waited with the greatest impatience for the close of your melancholy narrative—what is become of your unfortunate visitor? what is become of Charles? Sophia, who after a fever of ten days continuance is but just able to sit up whilst her bed is made, is always talking, and, as she says, always dreaming of her brother: she cannot suppose that he is in a state of existence, and capable of absenting himself from his sisters in their present situation.—The new rector has been several times to visit his future residence, and seems to desire the possession of it with a degree of eagerness that ill suits the character he should support, whether as a christian or a gentleman. “So man from man may differ, whose clay is all alike.”—Had Dr. Mason found it under such circumstances, his delicacy would have wanted invitation even to see it; but Dr. Freeman, for that is our present pastor’s name, has never omitted a day since the late incumbent was interred, and seldom fails to temper his enquiries after the poor afflicted girl with sad lamentations upon the inconvenience he feels at being obliged to reside at his present house, though it has answered all his purposes for thirteen years that he has held the living; and has reared upon its produce seven sons and a daughter, all of whom are living; and Miss Freeman, as he calls her, as impatient as her father to come into our parish.—He has made a proposal of purchasing, at a fair appraisement, the furniture, plate, and house-linen, just as it stands—and I believe the girls would be glad to accept his offer, but Sophia wants to see Charles first.—The Doctor has left a will in his own hand-writing, by which he bequeaths his books, manuscript sermons, &c. to his son; and whatever ready-money he should die possessed of, together with his household furniture, garden tools, plate, china, linen, and pictures, to be made into three equal lots, and appropriated to his girls; or, if they agree upon selling the whole, the produce to be added to the ready-money, and the whole equally divided amongst them.—His mode of appointing executors is whimsical, and speaks his character; he says, that he has always been so fortunate in the esteem and friendship of his parishioners, that he will leave it to Providence to appoint any one of them to the sacred trust of his dear orphans—and begs, that whoever happens to assist his girls in opening his will, may consider himself as their guardian by divine appointment.—To this trust Mr. Bellas has succeeded, and seems greatly delighted with the employment. Eliza has amused herself with making my baby-things, but Henrietta does not seem to relish any thing but reading.—If I had any mode of conveyance for Sophia, that did not endanger her life, I would have her removed directly, and give Mr. Freeman possession of the house; but I will wait till I hear from you again. If Charles could collect himself sufficiently to come down, I think it might be of great service to them all—the girls would be the better satisfied with whatever they do, if it had his approbation; and he might, by busying himself in their concerns, forget, at least in some degree, his own—so true it is, that self-love and social are the same.—If his person be so engrossed by this most unhappy adventure as to be lost to them; at least desire him to write to his sisters, and give his opinion and advice; which, circumstanced as they are, should

certainly, in any situation, claim his attention and regard.—We found in the Doctor's bureau a memorandum-book, which gave us a very clear account of what he left behind him; in an adjoining drawer we found seven hundred pounds in bank-notes; and in another about fifty-six pounds in cash, which, as we managed, defrayed the expences of the funeral, a few little bills to different trades-people, and purchased mourning for the three girls; and I believe Mr. Bellas may have seven or eight pounds in balance, which he concludes will pay the apothecary's bills, when it shall please heaven to restore Sophia. I am greatly alarmed at not having heard from you for more than a week—because I know it must be very bad indeed with you, when you relinquish your pen.—Write, my dear sister, and relieve your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER X.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

THE most alarming apprehensions you can have conceived, unless they related to my personal welfare, must fall short of what I have suffered since I last wrote to you.—Why it has pleased Providence to spare my life and my senses, under such distressful circumstances, he best knows: I dare not murmur; nor can I, as I ought, be grateful.—According to my notes—the last circumstance respecting Amelia, that I related to you, was her request to be permitted to *write*, instead of giving a personal information to her uncle and me, of the rise and progress of this fatal attachment between her and Charles; which she promised to set about as soon as we would compose the agitation of her mind, by giving her some account of him, from the time she tore herself from him, to follow her uncle, on Monday evening.—I went down stairs to make this proposal to Mr. Clement; who accepted the conditions, ordered some pens, ink, and paper, to be carried up to her room along with the breakfast-things; and said, that as I promised her my company, he would go and call upon the unhappy young man, and hear *his* story, that, by comparing both, he might be enabled to judge what degree of credit and protection was due to either—but that, mean time, he had held himself bound, by every feeling of an husband, to inform Mr. Merisford that his wife was in his care.—I could not condemn the step, yet my heart foreboded something fatal in its consequences.—He left me, and kindly thanked me for my conduct towards his unhappy niece, with words so sweet, as made my merit small.—I had returned to Amelia's room, and was making the tea, when I heard a voice in the hall very loud and angry.—I just opened the door near which I sat, and heard the same voice pronounce—"Well, I will find him, so tell him from me."—Francis, who is very fond of his master, jealous of his honor, and perhaps angry at being supposed to assert a falshood, replied, pertly, "Sir, my master is a gentle-man, and owes nothing to nobody, so he has no call to deny himself if he *was* at home." The boisterous voice again repeated, "Well, I will find him, and let him know that he owes me—justice."—Amelia, who had turned pale and red, and red and pale, several times in the course of this war of words, at the last sound dropped off her chair—and, as she fell, exclaimed, "Angry Providence, must the charity of my benefactors involve them!"—She could say no more—I rang the bell. Selby came into the room, and, as she entered, said,

“Sir, this is the young lady’s bed-chamber—perhaps”—“Trouble yourself with no farther conjectures, young woman,” said the ill-looking wretch, “I have been in the young lady’s bedchamber before now, and mayhap may again.” These discordant sounds were more powerful than my sal-volatile:—She opened her eyes, screamed, “My husband!” and ran and threw herself, her face downward, on the bed.—I was so frightened, I neither knew what to say, nor whom to speak to;—my usual presence of mind entirely forsook me.—Yet, as Amelia had assured me she had not *wronged* his bed, I confess, my mind, at the first glimpse I had of the man, applauded her *forsaking* it. For sure, my dear, though marriage, where the *minds* are joined as well as the bodies, is a most honourable state, as it is a happy one; where that sweet union is not made, marriage of the bodies *only* cannot, to the eye of reason or of sentiment, be deemed other than licensed prostitution: and if the woman willingly approaches the altar, and leaves her heart behind; to the indelicate vice of prostitution, she adds the impious one of perjury. This, however, is a charge from which my poor Amelia has thoroughly exculpated herself;—but of that hereafter; you shall see her defence in her own words. I will keep this till I can add something more.

MARIANNE.

LETTER XI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS,

in continuation.

YOU cannot well suppose a situation so disagreeable as mine: the wife—the eloped wife, on one side; and the deserted husband on the other:—she weeping and trembling, he railing and threatening.—At last, I summoned courage enough to speak; and, addressing myself to the monster, I assured him, “however displeasing to an husband the step which my niece had taken, yet that she had solemnly cleared her innocence to her uncle and me, so far as respected the honor of his bed—that, though the disturbed state of her mind had not permitted much conversation; yet we understood, that she had always dealt honestly with him, in declaring a prepossession in favour of another—that, where a man married a woman so circumstanced, he must either have a very partial passion for the lady’s *person*, or a very romantic confidence in her *mind*—that, so far as I could learn, she had not abused his confidence, but wished to decline it—that, having gained, by the death of her father, a small independence, it was her design to have escaped to Germany, where there are several Protestant nunneries, and there to have fixed for the remainder of her life; but that an accident had discovered her to her uncle; and, when he had brought her home, he thought it his duty to acquaint him with it—that, as a husband, who knew the nicety of an husband’s honor, he even thought it expedient that Mr. Merisford should be certain to an *hour*, when she came into our house; since when, no creature but ourselves, and my own maid, had had access to her.”—I was at the length of my argument, to which point I had arrived without the least interruption—the poor victim not daring to lift up her eyes—and the golden calf to which she had been sacrificed having employed himself in the contemplation of an amazing fine brilliant, which he wore upon a hand that nature designed for other decorations, but which seemed so devoted to the religion of its master, which is the idolatry of every thing dirty and every thing expensive, that it scorned an alliance with any thing so common and vulgar as soap, and to all appearance has kept clear of such company these seven years.—When he found I paused, he put his hand in his coat-pocket, and, pulling out a filthy pocket-handkerchief, which he displayed as an assistant to his oration, he began, “Why, look ye, madam, as to the honor, and the nicety, and all that, I be’nt so particular;—I married, because I was rich, and thought as how I ought to have an heir, d’ye see, to leave behind me, to keep up my name.—To be sure, miss told me as how she had a great regard for a young man, and he for she:—but her father know’d better, and giv’d her to me.—In Turkey, where I made eighty thousand pounds, I might have had as many wives, d’ye see; but I did not fancy they:—now, as I happened to see miss when I went down into Yorkshire, to see a main-fine estate that I had bought, and thought as I cou’d fancy her; I ax’d her father; and told’n what I had a gotten to make a jointure for her; and when I had his good-will, I did’nt stand shilly-shally, but come up straight to London, and got the writings finished out of hand. When I went back, miss knows I was not stingy in my mind towards her: I carried her a fine set of diamonds; and told her, when she could bring herself to fancy me, that she shou’d eat gold, and drink gold; and that, as for that there young man, d’y’see, the rarities and diversions of London wou’d soon put’n out of her head.”—In the course of this

elegant harangue, she sat up, and appealed to me with her eyes, the language of which I very well understood, for a full and free pardon; which, I scruple not to confess, my eyes returned; my heart confessed, that for such a woman to be joined to such a man, was the worst of crimes; and that an escape, unattended with any circumstance of guilt, must be, not only an excusable, but a laudable, elopement. He looked to her, as if for an answer. She attempted to speak, but tears stopped her utterance. He began again—"As soon as we come to town, I took a house in Berkley-square, and desired her to choose, whether she wou'd have a new coach, or a chariot, or both:—and when I found that she and I sometimes used to be at a loss for conversation—I told her, that if she chose to find any young gentle-woman as was poor, and mayhap might be glad to live with us, that I shou'd have no dislike on't:—so at last she did find one, that was the daughter of a captain, who, having lost an eye in the service, liv'd to see a wife and four children starving on his half-pay; this minx, when she had gotten herself in a warm house, began to be pert; and because I sometimes thought it right to remind her of her obligations, to make her a little grateful, for contradiction sake she took it in quite a different light, and was more pert than she was before; and so one night, as they two were at Ranelagh, my madam there found an opportunity to contrive, by means of this dependant, to run away with some young fellow that she never saw before."—By this time the poor creature had a little composed herself; and having courage to speak, she addressed herself to me: "Permit me, my dear aunt, under the shelter of your presence and protection, to answer all that Mr. Merisford has advanced, in as few words as possible."—"Don't you provoke me, madam, says he, or—" "Oh, Sir, says she, I fear your blows less than my own reflections, and those of the world, who know not me, nor my provocations." At the word *blows*, I started, and reiterated, "*Blows ! Amelia !*"—"Yes, ma'am." "Go on, madam," says he, "tell your fine story, to melt the gentlewoman's heart, and get her excuse for making a brute of your husband." She burst into tears—"that Power who has seen your brutality to me, knows that I am innocent of the foul charge;—yet be not flattered; it was what I owed to myself, not you, that saved me." She then recapitulated many past transactions, in their nature almost too horrid to repeat;—at all events I will omit them now, as probably they will be contained in her own narrative; and a repetition of even agreeable circumstances becomes tedious; when the matter is of a contrary nature, it is unpardonable. He listened with a degree of insensibility that shocked me, if possible, more than the accusation. And when she had gone as far as her own delicacy would permit, he again surveyed his brilliant, took out his handkerchief, and, brandishing it with one hand, he held out the other, "Come, Milly, says he, as long as I be'nt a cuckold, I'll forgive thee;—not but you might have done your worst, if you had managed with prudence, and not made me the laughing-stock of my acquaintance: howsomever, if you have a mind to be friends, say the word, and I'll never upbraid you no more; only, if you can bring yourself to fancy me, why it may add a hundred a-year to your pin-money, as you fine ladies call it; if not, a man must have a wife; and as long as I have one—mayhap you may be as good as another."—"Mr. Merisford, says she, I never deceived you—I never will—it is out of nature for you and I to be happy—I cannot love you—I cannot obey you—the woman who can long continue a good wife to one man, whilst her wishes are all another's, must have the possession of a virtue for which I know no name—it is not patience—it is not fortitude—it is not self-denial—it is not chastity: but it is a combination of all those virtues in one. I do not possess it.—My duty is yours, if an involuntary vow can bind the free-born soul:—but my heart, my soul, my virgin-vows, were all bestowed before

I saw you. I told you this, and yet you married me.”—Here we were interrupted, by the arrival of Mr. Clement: I hear his bell.

MARIANNE.

LETTER XII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS,

in continuation.

MY dear Charlotte must be impatient to get to the end of my narrative, and therefore, whilst Mr. Clement is in a fine sleep, I will give myself up to her. I have hitherto communicated only those feelings which sympathy produces; but, ere long, the character of the lamenting friend will be changed to that of the distracted wife! Heaven has been gracious, however, to my hopes; and my Charles can once more look up, and bid me be comforted. I mentioned, at the close of the last page, the arrival of Mr. Clement; but did not tell you that he was brought in a chair, fainting with pain and loss of blood! the monster with whom I had been sitting had, without knowing it, been the cause. Well did my heart inform me when first I saw him; and side with heaven and my Amelia.—Selby, just at the period at which I closed, came into the room, with more composure than I could have expected on such an occasion; and told me that her master was returned. This, as it was usual, did not alarm me; and my dislike to leaving the ill-matched pair alone made me pause;—by which time I heard Francis roar, “My master! my dear master!” That exclamation made me deaf to every other sound; my fears lent me wings, and in an instant I was down in the parlour, where they had rested, by his desire, till I came. It is impossible for me to describe the scene; nor, indeed, to you, who know us both, can it be necessary.—When Mr. Forbes came, he examined the wound; and, by the faintness of his manner, in *hoping* all would be well, deprived me of all hope.—You know the sanguinity of my disposition—I cannot bear doubt in the cause of those I love;—however, the wounds were dressed; and Mr. Clement, in pity to my distraction, lay so quiet, that, by a kind deception practised upon me, he brought his own safety to a reality. An occurrence in favour of your maxim, Charlotte—by sacrificing to oblige others, we always, eventually, oblige ourselves.—My mind, however, was too much interested to be quick of belief; every favourable symptom engaged my gratitude; but the fear of an unfavourable one succeeding, lessened my present enjoyment.—For several hours after I first saw his deathly countenance, every other impression was erased from my memory.—I even lost the anxiety of distressing you—no wonder then if I did not enquire for poor Amelia, till she was gone, past recovery—the brute having taken advantage of the confusion of our house, to force her away; and, as the grocer at the corner of our street told Francis, hurried her into a coach amidst the curses of the passers-by, who no sooner saw, but they were interested for her.—Several days passed, in which I could not gain the least intelligence of either her or Charles—nor could I venture upon the subject nearest my heart, though I had reason to guess, from the first hints Mr. Clement dropped, that Merisford had been the cause.—Even now, he chuses to be silent on the subject; and though he cannot exculpate Charles, he pities him.—For oh, my sister, however shocking! it was Charles’s sword which pierced my husband’s side; and, had the wound been a sixteenth of an inch more central, it must have passed through his heart.—As far as I can collect from the different disjointed conversations we have had, which, however my curiosity prompts, I never press—that letter which Mr. Clement sat up the Monday night to write to Merisford, respecting the safety of his wife, and which his own delicacy pointed out

to him as an essential duty—by some means or other he conveyed, or at least its contents, to Charles. The unhappy young man considered it as a breach of confidence, and, in the agonies of his despair, wrote to Mr. Clement, instantly demanding satisfaction—and *that* it was that made him so glad to engage me with Amelia, that he might, without surprizing me, go out directly.—How wonderful are the dispensations of Almighty Providence!—how anxiously did I press his going to see the unfortunate youth! how little foresee the consequence!—He declares that he took every gentle method of composing his mind; but, when he found there was no alternative but drawing his sword, or delivering Amelia to him, (which, knowing her to be the wife of another, was impossible)—he was obliged to comply with the former,—the consequence you have heard, so far as it respects Mr. Clement—but—the truth must be told.—Poor unhappy, ill-fated, Charles is now no more!—Shocked at spilling the blood of his friend, who had gone such lengths to serve him, he fell upon his own sword, and expired immediately. I would fain have softened the catastrophe—but death admits of no medium—it is—a journey’s end.—Upon his table the following letter was found, directed,

(LETTER XIII.)

TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MADAM,

RECEIVE a dying man’s contrition for the complicated miseries he has brought upon your family.—The dishonour of your niece hangs heavy on my soul—the blood of your husband overwhelms it.—But your surviving misery, added to what my Amelia feels, restored to the tyranny of an unfeeling, a licensed monster, tears my heart separate ways, and claims the expiation of its dearest drops.—The sword is drawn—despair is ripe for execution—accept the atonement, and pity the untimely fate of the lost

CHARLES MASON.

Paper Buildings,
Tuesday afternoon.

P.S. There were likewise letters to his sister and Amelia, which I suppose the servant will forward. My mind is sore with the painful recapitulation. Adieu!

MARIANNE.

LETTER XIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I Received your dismal packet just before I sat down to dinner, and have never since recovered the shock of the catastrophe, notwithstanding the kind road through which you led me to it.—Mr. Bellas is as much concerned, and sets out at five o'clock to visit Mr. Clement. I am afraid to accompany him, though I long eagerly to embrace my dear sister, and congratulate the return of health to a brother, who has been almost a father to me.—Sophia is pretty well recovered, and I have got her home—but how to break the dreadful news to her, without giving her immediate death, I know not.—The furniture, &c. of the Parsonage-house is to be sold tomorrow: Mr. Bellas has engaged an appraiser and auctioneer, of very fair character, to come down for the purpose.—He thinks it best to dispose of them publickly, that if any of the parishioners, who esteemed the father, have a disposition to make a handsome present to the girls (as he has been informed), they may have an opportunity of doing it, without offering violence to their delicacy—and if Doctor Freeman chuses to buy the whole, he will still have it in his power.—He and his daughter came to the house yesterday; and as they ordered their horses to be taken out, Mr. Bellas thought he owed his character the compliment of asking him to dine with us.—The doctor thanked him with a ceremonious civility; said, “That they did purpose returning to a late dinner; but that they could not be insensible to the temptation, and would accept the invitation.”—The girl blushed her acquiescence; and to accommodate them (for they had nine miles across the country to go in a heavy chariot), we dined at two o'clock.—I was very much pleased with them both, notwithstanding the prejudice I had conceived against them for an unfeeling haste to step into the seat of my worthy deceased friend; but the most candid mind will sometimes, under certain circumstances, deviate from itself.—It is the property of narrow minds *only*, to persist in prejudice against conviction.—Mr. Bellas will give you this; and, as he knows my heart best, he shall speak its sentiments towards my dear sister.

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XV

MR. BELLAS TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAREST LIFE,

ABOUT eleven last night I arrived at your sister's house, a poor melancholy single wretch, feeling—like an Adam without an Eve.—There is a vacuity in the human breast, which only one object can fill; and which, in the absence of that object, must, in spite of the propensities which reason and philosophy would *argue* into our minds, become an aching void. This was my six hours contemplation, from the moment I left you at Frogly Farm, till I arrived at Mr. Clement's in ——Street.—He was gone to-bed, having set up four hours in charming spirits. Your sister, having poured out the effusion of her capacious heart, in thanks for his recovery—for my kindness in this visit—on the beauty of her children, every one of which she insisted upon my viewing as they lay asleep—and in her eager and honest prayers for your safe and speedy recovery, and my living to see myself and you possessed of three such little angels as hers—gave me a neat little supper, and ordered my bed to be warmed.—Whilst I sat with *her*, I did not think myself quite deprived of *you*—but when I went to bed—that very bed, which on my wedding-night received me to the arms of—oh, Charlotte!—if I cannot sleep a night without you—I tremble to think—what an absolute power such a bewitching little woman must have, if she were disposed to abuse it.—Adieu! my soul! your brother is much better than he was yesterday.—Your sister is very well, if she would be content to remain so; but that busy, social, sympathetick soul of hers will impose so many of other people's loads upon the little body that contains it, that she always runs the race of life with the odds at least twenty to one against her. Once more adieu! Write to me directly. I propose returning on Friday—mean time, take care of my boy, and remember that upon thy safety depends that of thy

F. BELLAS.

LETTER XVI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MR. BELLAS.

MY DEAR LOVE!

I Should not have wanted the influence of a command, to enforce a duty so pleasant as that of writing to you—so pleasant as all the duties are which love and you are entitled to—and yet it is with difficulty I can *now* write at all.—Do not be alarmed, my love—but excuse my writing a *few* lines, as I am obliged to do it in bed—a little accident, I trust of no ill consequence, obliged me to come to-bed about seven yesterday evening; and Mr. Powell advises me to lie still for a day or two, as the best means to avoid at a certainty—a misfortune to the little existence about which you are so anxious.—Adieu! my love! For all the kind, the flattering things you say, accept these tears of gratitude—accept emotions, which, though no language can do them justice, your heart can judge of by its own.

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XVII.

Enclosing the former.

MISS MASON TO MR. BELLAS.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING received Mrs. Bellas's commands to fold and forward the inclosed, which, with great pain and difficulty, she wrote, supported by Mrs. Collins and myself, I take the liberty to write a few lines in the cover, to request that your stay in London may be as short as possible.—This liberty I will not apologize for, as I consider it as an act of duty.—Bound as my family are by every tie of gratitude, respect, and affection to yours, I think sincerity indispensable.—Mr. Powell is afraid that Mrs. Bellas cannot go out the time of her reckoning—he has not told her so—but if he had, her tenderness for you would perhaps induce her to conceal it.—I send this by Philip's brother, who is going to London, and promises to deliver it in six hours at farthest.—I beg leave to present my respects to Mrs. Clement, and remain, Sir, your most grateful, and most obedient humble servant,

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XVIII.

MR. BELLAS TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY HEART'S TREASURE,

WHILST the horses are putting to, I write, without knowing what I write, or for what purpose.—I have your letter enclosed by Miss Mason.—Tell the good girl how she has obliged me by her attention. Marianne is distracted between the wife and the sister—she wants to go with me—she wants to see her sister, but cannot leave her husband.—He mends but very slowly—what he gains one day, he loses the next.—I have been here three days; and though he has varied much, and often, in that time, he is now rather worse than when I came.—I have sent for Doctor B—, who attends your sister; she will endeavour to prevail with him to accompany me; if it be possible, she is sure he will—for he is a man of the greatest humanity as well as experience.—She is so miserable, that nothing else can appease her.—She has no patience with your being attended by a country apothecary and an old woman—(you know her way) and almost hates me, for acquiescing with your lying-in in the country.—My dear Charlotte knows it was her own choice—but she says I am the master of my family, and should do as I please.—What a little tyrant!—Never be it know between us, who is first in command!—Doctor B—— is come, and, at your sister's request, will set out with me in an hour. Mean time may every guardian power make my dear Charlotte its care; and leave the rest of mankind to chance! I send this but just before me; but every minute is an age in love.—If I arrive by the time you have broke the seal, I will tell you all its contents, and spare you the trouble of reading:—if not, let it serve as an irregular reflection of my heart's inmost feelings, and avow its truth and devotion to my Charlotte.

F. BELLAS.

LETTER XIX.

MR. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

I TAKE advantage of your worthy doctor's return to town, to set your heart quite at ease about Charlotte—though perhaps his own account of the matter will better effect that purpose. In little more than five hours we arrived at the Farm. I fancy my heart was in my face; for Sophia's first salute was, "Dear Sir, I am shocked to think how my busy impertinence must have troubled you;—for heaven's sake, compose yourself before you go up stairs—Mrs. Bellas is better—I hope Mr. Powell will be mistaken—she is more alarmed at your letter, than she was at her own illness—I am an unfortunate wretch, born to repay the goodness of my benefactors, by making them unhappy!" The poor girl wept bitterly; and whilst I endeavoured to reconcile her to having proceeded upon the properest principle, I insensibly recovered a degree of serenity, to meet my Charlotte, and introduce Dr. B——. As soon as I had satisfied the eagerness of my impatience by seeing her, I left the Doctor to his enquiries; and, having prepared a *douceur*, waited in the fore-parlour to receive him. He came down with a countenance beaming benevolent satisfaction; assured me, the alarm was a false one; and hinted, that he should not like to trust the care of a lady, in her *first* lying-in particularly, to the care of a person so much disposed to make mountains of molehills, as he expressed himself.—I told him, that I could not conquer Mrs. Bellas's invincible dislike to London; but that, if any young man of skill and ability in the physical way chose to set up at Frogly, I could ensure him success, from the general opinion being much against Powell both as an apothecary and a man.—By the way, I do not know how Sophia will relish this; for I am afraid her peace of mind would vanish with Powell, whenever he left us.

Accept, for yourself and Mr. Clement, the sincerest affection of

CHARLOTTE and F. BELLAS.

LETTER XX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MR. BELLAS.

DEAR BROTHER,

I THANK you most sincerely for the packet of consolation you sent me by the doctor; he is quite delighted with the farm, and every thing that belongs thereunto—he assures me that he does not apprehend any danger to my sister; but seems to wish, as you hinted, that she would come to town to lye in—why will she be so obstinate? here is her own room, which I never suffer to be prophaned by common inhabitants; try if you can prevail upon her to use it, at least for *this* time; perhaps, by the next, you may have some person of skill in your neighbourhood;—mean time, dwell upon the consequence of improper treatment to the little one; and she will hear *that*, however deaf she may be to any arguments that respect only herself.—I have at last a letter from my poor Amelia—she is escaped once more, and in safe shelter in a convent in Germany.—She requests me to keep up a correspondence with her; and desires to be permitted to give an earnest of her esteem, by assuring me, that though her conduct has perfectly satisfied her own mind, yet its tranquillity cannot be compleat without my testimony in her favour. I have written to her, and accepted her offer with pleasure. It is astonishing to me, unless our souls were acquainted in a pre-existent state, how a few hours, which was all I knew her *here*, should have twined that unhappy creature round my heart—I really love her, like a sister—and know not why, except for being unfortunate.—That cannot be all—that might create pity; but I feel esteem—and that must be the produce of merit, at least imagined merit, in the object.—I promise myself and Charlotte great delight in perusing her history; and, as she has promised to divest herself as much as possible of the partiality of human nature, which her situation, I think, favors, it may mingle instruction with delight; for, grave faces may frown if they please, the human heart, *honestly unveiled*, is the best school of morality.

Mr. Clement is a good deal better; every fine day seems to bring him a large stride forward: yet the physicians think it will be necessary for him to go to some of our watering-places for a month or six weeks, as soon as there seems a probability of the weather being settled in a disposition of mildness. We did talk of inoculating Charles and Charlotte this spring; but, if we are obliged to leave town, I do not see how it will be possible.—I was lamenting this circumstance to Mrs. Belmour yesterday; and she said, she thought it would be a good opportunity of having it done whilst we were away—either at home under the care of Selby, or at Sutton's; which latter, indeed, she should prefer.—I love her vastly, or I believe I never should have spoke to her again. Mercy upon me! how can anybody be so indifferent about their children! Yet she seems to be composed of the milk of human kindness, and to feel for every body's illness or distresses.—There is a Mr. Deacon, who is an occasional visitor at Dover-Street; he has chambers in The Temple, and of course cannot be well accommodated in case of illness, having no servant but a valet, who is a Swiss, and whose only perfection is, dressing his hair; the master was confined for a few weeks last season, in the time of the influenza—and she was perpetually sending to know how he did; and, as he recovered, sending him jellies, blamanches, almond emulsions,

and all sorts of kitchen-comforts, to the continual trouble and employment of the house-keeper who made, and the footman who carried them.

My kindest wishes to my dear Charlotte, and believe me equally thy

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR MARIANNE,

BEING, I thank heaven, restored to the use of my pen, its first-fruits shall be yours.—Mr. Bellas did not like to resign the employment: but I insisted upon my right; and he has yielded, upon condition that I give up another point, in which I cannot withstand two advocates so powerful as you and he combined.—I accept then of my dear sister's invitation; and shall, with your permission, take possession of my old lodging-room on this day sevensnight—as I suppose another week will introduce the little stranger to our acquaintance. I own, I shall leave Frogly with regret, even though it be to come to you.—The spring is now in its morning-dress; in which, like a woman, whose chief beauty consists in a native elegance and a modest reserve, it yields, in my opinion, the greatest delight to the beholders, by shewing a *part* of its charms, and telling you, that there are others concealed, which the irresistible power of future suns will force to light, to bloom, to wither, and to die.—I have been somewhat distressed in the disposition of my family, in which I include the little mourners—at last I have resolved to gratify Sophia's wishes, by taking her with me, and leaving the two youngest under the care of Collins, upon whom I can absolutely rely:—she is rather hurt at not going with me; but she sees the necessity of staying with the little girls; and Sophia will supply her place, by sitting with me, packing and unpacking, &c.—The good girl has a most amiable disposition, which makes her carry her gratitude so much beyond any little services I have done her, as to leave me on the debtor side of the account; in discharge of which, how happy should I be to save her from a connection which can never make her happy; and yet, I fear, it will be impossible—in the course of my accidental illness, I have discovered that her innocent heart is the property of a Mr. Powell, an apothecary who attended her father in his late illness; and, since that, herself.—He has been some years settled in the village; and since I have made this observation upon her conduct, I have taken some pains to enquire into his character, which I find to be a very opposite one to hers—in short, a bad one.—She is all gentleness, benevolence, humanity—but has a mind above her circumstances; even in the effusions of her gratitude, there is a dignity that commands as much respect as if she were in the act of conferring favors beyond those which she acknowledges.—He is, by the general voice of the village, a timeserving, unfeeling, selfish man; cringing, and mean to his superiors; insolent and fawning, by turns, to his equals; and at all times oppressive and overbearing to his inferiors. Collins has taken great pains—it is in her power to converse freely with all the middling and lower people of the village; and it is there that nature speaks without disguise.—Even in the part of his conduct which fell under my own observation, I found so many objectionable circumstances, that I was shocked when I found he had made an

impression on Sophia.—The extreme retirement of her life has deprived her of any opportunities of judging of a man but by his own professions, and Mr. Powell is not sparing of those.—One anecdote I must tell you:—You used to say that a combination of small circumstances were better instructions how to judge of a character, than even as many great ones; for in the latter case, every man is on his guard, and acts as he thinks his interests demand; but in the former, the dispositions which nature have given him operate, as it were, without his interference.—For the present, I must rest.—I am so unwieldy, that I am fit for nothing.—Good night!

Ever yours,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I AM very happy at having obtained your acquiescence to my request; nor am I mortified at being obliged to an auxiliary whom I love so well as your husband;—mine is, I thank heaven, almost as well as ever; and does not like the thoughts of leaving his little ones, to mix in the impertinent scenes which every watering-place must involve him in; for, however one despises others for their acquiescence with the reigning follies of the time and place they live in, one must do it one's-self, and be mutually despised by the few sensible people, whose esteem in any other situation would be, perhaps, one's due.—You do not know how sorry I am for poor Sophia—bring her to town by all means; and, as that wretch Merisford said of poor Amelia, “Mayhap the rarities of London may put'n out of her head.”—You have never told me whether the poor girls know any thing of their unfortunate brother—if not, I should imagine they ought, before Sophia comes to town; as perhaps, without lessening her merit towards you, the expectation of seeing him may be, partly, her inducement to come here.—Our Francis, who is a little apt to over-rate his own sagacity, has several times assured Selby, that he saw Charles, after we were informed by his servant of his death, by his own hand—yet the letter which he left for me, seemed dictated by an honest despair; and the act itself, however unpardonable if we consider suicide as defended by reason, yet under his circumstances, and the feelings natural in his then situation, called loudly for our pity, though it could not challenge our approbation.—Yet I may be mistaken, but I remember it struck me at the time of receiving the letter, that the hand was materially different from any of his notes that I ever saw—but my mind was in such a state of apprehension for my husband's safety, that I did not pursue the thought any farther; perhaps there may be some mystery which I have not yet discovered. I should rejoice at any circumstance, however improbable the chance, that should restore so amiable a young man as he seemed to me to be, to the guardianship of his sisters, and the friendship of those who esteem him.—You will be able to tell me when we meet, whether the sale turned out advantageously for the poor girls, and whether you had so much christianity in your parish as you seemed to expect.—Mean time, if there be any thing that you would have done in the way of preparation for a certain great event, let me know it, and I shall be happy.—You know that we are to have Amelia's history.—I have desired her to write as fast as she can, but not to send it in divided parts, as the effect of the whole would, in my opinion, be injured, by reading it in such small parcels as a letter would contain; besides, about August, Mr. Clement proposes sending a young gentleman, whom he has in the compting-house, to a part of Germany very near where she resides, upon a matter of business in which he is concerned with a house which has lately stopped payment.—He shall be deputed my ambassador on the occasion, by which means we shall run no hazard of losing so pleasing a source of entertainment as I expect this sweet girl's narrative to prove.—She seems possessed of a just and proper way of thinking—a head full of reflection, and a heart full of sensibility—add to these requisites, a happy choice of words, and the produce must be delightful.—Adieu, my dear! I must go and dress; we are this evening to exhibit our wax-candles in the rout-way—seven

card-tables, and a party, for *troué madam*: If I can help it, I will not play myself.—Do you know that I begin to wish I had never consented to oblige Mr. Clement in this one article?—I spent so many years of my life very pleasantly, without knowing spadille from basto, that I can the less reconcile it to myself to throw away my time and money upon such unnecessary amusements; but what most mortifies me is, that I should put it in the power of chance to ruffle my temper; and that I should very often lament more pathetically the absence of a black ace than that of a friend; or give a welcome to the ill-looking duce of clubs, as hearty as that I meditate for my Charlotte.

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXIII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

MR. Bellas having an inclination to finish a plantation he is engaged in before we leave Frogly, I deferred my journey three days beyond the time mentioned in my last, which shall, I hope, complete it. Mean time, I will cut out some work for the little girls, to employ them till I return.—Miss Freeman is really an amiable girl; and, notwithstanding she is entitled in right of her mother to ten thousand pounds, which will in about another year render her independent, she has been so happy in being endowed with a natural sweetness of temper, and those endowments so happily cultivated by her mother, who was an excellent woman, that she is as perfectly obedient to her father as if she looked up to him for bread; and her humility and gentleness of deportment towards her brothers, the servants, and every body indeed that falls in her way, have gained her the universal love of all.—I am vastly pleased in knowing so much of this young lady before I go to town, on account of Eliza and Henrietta, to whom she has shewn an affection almost sisterly; but, for what reason I cannot conceive, she don't like Sophia.—Her virtues, to say truth, are not of the shining kind; you must *know* her, to value her: whereas Eliza's liveliness, and Henrietta's beauty, strike the moment you see them, and have the singular good-fortune to improve upon you ever after.—There is but one objection arises in my mind to their being intimate, and that regards only *Eliza*. Doctor Freeman has six sons at home, all of whom he educates himself—the eldest of the seven is in the road to ordination; and as soon as he is inducted to the living which his father has just quitted, the eldest of the six takes his place at Cambridge.—Henry, Thomas, William, George, Francis, and John, are the prettiest little party you can imagine, to escort their sister and our girls to the rector's pew every Sunday, where they all sit together according to their respective ages.—Henry and his sister, Thomas and Sophia, William and Eliza, and George and Henrietta, are within a year (each as I have paired them) of each other's ages.—But though Henry is obliged, to please his father, who marshals the groupe, to couple with his sister, he takes every opportunity of coupling himself with Eliza, and she seems to have no objection to *his* mode of conducting the matter; but confesses, in the honest simplicity of fifteen, that she shall be very sorry when Henry goes to Cambridge, and wishes that Thomas had been the eldest.—As to Henrietta, she has more reserve, though seven years younger; but if she has a golden-pippin given her in the course of the week, she is sure to keep it till Sunday, unless she has an opportunity in the interval of making master George a present of it—he is, to be sure, the sweetest little boy I ever beheld—the finest form and face you can conceive—the most expressive countenance, not a line but speaks—eyes that pierce you to the heart, without giving pain, and the finest auburn hair in the world.—His disposition is, if possible, more amiable than his person.—He has the principles of natural benevolence so strongly implanted in him, that it extends even to things inanimate; and if he happens to fall in any of his playful expeditions, he is more anxious for the consequences to any body, or any thing he falls against, then even to himself—this you know, is a description that will answer for Henrietta too (he it seems is most like his mother); so that I do not wonder their little hearts palpitate by

the genuine force of sympathy.—The Doctor seems to see the several little parties with pleasure; and, as George is happily provided for by a relation of rank, who was his godfather, I should be glad their present propensities should grow up with them.—Our neighbours behaved in a manner which reflects honor upon their deceased pastor, the village, and themselves. Four of them bought single pictures at the auction, and sent the girls a hundred pound note each. Dr. Freeman did the same—and the plate, linen, furniture, &c. brought five hundred and thirty pounds.—Mr. Bellas means to make it even hundreds, and place the whole in the most advantageous of the publick funds. Till we meet, adieu! Collins tells me that Sophia has just received her brother's letter. Good heaven support her! Mr. Bellas's love accompanies that of your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAREST SISTER,

I NEVER was so thoroughly surprized and shocked, as about an hour after I sent off my last letter to you. I told you that Sophia had received a letter from her brother; and as I did not doubt but it was a duplicate to yours, I equally dreaded and wished to see how she deported herself under the shocking news, which I never yet could summon courage to tell her.—When I first heard from you of his being engaged in an imprudent amour, I mentioned it to her, just in the light in which we saw it; she has often renewed the subject; but though my natural hate of equivocation made it painful to me to be silent on such an occasion, yet, in order to undeceive her, such horrid truths, as we thought them, must have been told, that I found the talk beyond my execution, and waited till you and I might have an opportunity of breaking it to her together;—and even brought the books, sermons, &c. which by his father's will became his, home to our own house, though I thought it likely that they might be the subject of a future sale; as to them, they were (of a kind to be) quite useless.—I had occasion to go into the house-keeper's room to speak to Collins about some matters, which were to be altered in my absence; and as that is a part of the house which I am very seldom in, it did not occur to Sophia, who had been every where else to seek me—upon going up to the room I commonly sit in, I found her with the two younger girls, in contemplation of Charles's letter; nor could I, from their countenances, guess at the contents—Sophia was in a kind of stupor—Eliza seemed as if she had been crying, without well knowing why—and the dear little sympathetic Henrietta was sobbing till her little heart-strings seemed ready to crack; upon my entrance, she ran up to me, and, laying hold of my apron, she cried, “Oh, madam, what will become of us now, when we leave you? we have no brother, no father, no friend that will love us, because Charles has been so naughty.”—I took the sweet girl in my arms, and kissed away her tears—told her, that, whilst Mr. Bellas or I lived, she had no chance of being without a friend—that I had known, for some time, that Charles was dead; but did not wish to add to their distresses, till their spirits were sufficiently recovered to be able to bear it. Upon this, Sophia, who had not spoke before, threw herself at my feet, and, with great calmness, begged that I would give credit to the sincerity with which she had desired to attend me in my approaching illness; and pity her for the regret she should feel at being deprived of it—but that, in her circumstances, it would be a hardiness she was not capable of, to look you in the face:—that her brother was not dead; but that he lived only to remorse and repentance—that, in the very moment of desperation, when he had sealed the letter which conveyed his real intention to Mr. Clement, and had raised the point on which he meant to fall, his father's sacred shade appeared in view; and, by an awful frown, prevented the perpetration of an act so horrid.—But that his offences to Mr. Clement and his family were of such a nature, that though he did not dare, after so solemn an admonition, to expiate them with his blood—yet he would atone them with a severer penance, an everlasting exile from all that he held dear.—I raised the dear girl, and bad her be comforted; told her, that I knew the full extent of the unhappy young man's offences—and could pronounce, for you and my brother, his pardon:—that I was sure she would not be the less

welcome;—and that you should tell her so yourself.—I am confident that the intelligence of his being alive will give as much pleasure to you and Mr. Clement as it does to

Your ever affectionate

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXV.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE!

YOU have transported me out of my little wits!—Good heaven be praised! I shall always think highly of Francis's truth and sagacity in future.—It is not in language to give you an idea of Mr. Clement's joy at the discovery of Charles's being alive; he considered him as a victim to honor and sensibility; and so far he esteemed him, and loved his memory; but when he reflected that it was in expiation of *his* blood that he spilled his own, there was an effusion of horror attendant upon the reflection, which I really believe retarded his recovery.—Within these last two days he has had some severe spasms, which the great-wigs call rheumatick; and press him to go to Bath.—I like Bath better than any other water-drinking place; but at this season of the year it begins to grow disagreeable: however, if they think the hot-baths essentially necessary, we must not think of what is, or is not, agreeable.—However, I hope we shall keep it off till my dear Charlotte has taken possession of the house which I hope she will use and consider as her own. I will write to Sophia, and beg you will enforce what I shall say by the persuasion which friendship lends to the rhetoric of the heart.—I love the girl for her nicety of sentiment; but narrow indeed must that soul be who could reflect upon her the crimes of her brother.—Very different from such a mind, I thank the Forming Hand! is that of Mr. Clement;—thoroughly studied in the most useful of all sciences, that of human nature, he is ever ready to make allowances for its defects: by the acquisition of this knowledge, he is prevented from over-rating his friends, or under-rating his common acquaintances; for enemies he has none:—by this he is rendered a steady friend, a valuable companion, a good husband, father, master, and subject;—for in judging of those who are in any of those views related to him, he expects not perfection; but, weighing the good against the bad, in their characters, if the former preponderates, he is satisfied—so much the better for thy

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MISS MASON.

MY dear Miss Mason comes so strongly recommended by my sister's affection for her, that I cannot put her upon the footing of a new correspondent.—It is however necessary, from a recent circumstance, that I should formally request the favour of her company at my house on Friday next, when Mr. and Mrs. Bellas make me happy with theirs.—A room next to theirs is fitted up for her; and every welcome that her merits and her severe affliction demands, shall, so far as my ability extends, attend her.—Mr. Clement desires me to present his compliments, and assures you, Madam, that the joy he feels at your brother's escape from an offence against the Almighty, so far surpassing any he can have committed against him, can only be exceeded by welcoming his return to London, when and where every effort within his power shall be made to comfort and to serve him.—And now, my dear girl, (for already I consider you as sitting by me) endeavour to recover your spirits; your duty has been amply paid to the dead, the living now claim your assistance.—My sister seems to consider your company as necessary to her safety; do not then let melancholy reflections disqualify you for an employment of so much trust.—Society is one vast chain, composed of links of different size and value, of which Providence intended you for a link of more than ordinary consequence, or the Great Machinist would not have formed you of materials so good, nor given those materials so high a polish.—I intend to set you to work, I can tell you.—My little beautiful wench has a mind as busy her eyes, which are the finest you ever saw, except her godmother's; and as you read better than any woman I ever met, I intend you shall pay for your journey to London, by teaching her.—It is but two years since she visited this sublunary world; but her soul speaks through her understanding; and says, that it existed from all eternity. Adieu! till we meet in London.

LETTER XXVII.

MISS MASON TO MISS ELIZA MASON.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

LATE on Friday evening we arrived at Mr. Clement's house in London; and found such welcome as hearts like those of the owners delight to give.—Mrs. Bellas bore the journey surprisingly well, and has rested much better after it than she has done for many months.—I have just left the breakfasting-room, where the whole family are assembled, and seem all so happy as to alarm me with the apprehension that it cannot last. There never were, perhaps, two sisters so different in all their sentiments, passions, and pleasures; and yet so perfectly agreeing upon one point, which in general depends upon a coincidence of those—a most unbounded affection for each other.—Mrs. Bellas is, as you must have observed, benevolent and humane; but such an implacable serenity governs her temper and actions, that a stranger would be tempted to pronounce her an insensible spectator of human misery; we—are the best arguments to the contrary.—Mrs. Clement is lively, to a degree of giddiness, that, to a superficial observer, would imply a total unconcern for the whole human race, nay, even for herself, and her estimation in the world; yet is her large heart, and bestowing hand, the fountain of happiness to all who fall within her knowledge; capable of quick and strong impressions, she always makes her judgement wait upon her feelings—or, in other words, her heart dictates, and her head must acquiesce, or labour in vain.—The consequence of this disposition, so tremblingly alive to the distresses of others, is almost perpetual anxiety to herself.—Mrs. Bellas feels for all that are in affliction; Mrs. Clement adopts those afflictions, and makes them her own:—Mrs. Bellas is an excellent wife upon the principles of duty, to a worthy man indeed, who merits all her attention; but she would be as good a wife to a man less deserving, from sentiment alone;—Mrs. Clement is a good wife to the man of her choice; but had she married a man to whom she did not look up with a consciousness of his superior sense and continued desert, her feelings are so incapable of disguise, that the sense of duty would often sleep, whilst her quick apprehension of injury, and her conscious merit of better treatment, would shew itself in spite of all the Schools for Wives that poets fancy and hypocrites admire.—As a mother, her enthusiasm delights me—she never speaks of any of her children without the epithet of *beautiful*—yet never suffers a fault worth notice to pass unpunished.—As a mistress, she is absolutely adored; but, astonishing as it may seem, I do not think I ever saw worse servants;—our Rachel had more work than three maids in her house; and it was always better done:—perhaps we may have put the house a little into confusion—but at present I see no specimens of London servants abilities.—There is a Mrs. Selby, who attends upon Mrs. Clement, and keeps the keys, whom I do not like at all; she is too finely dressed for a servant—but it may be the London-fashion.—Mrs. Clement sends for me to take the air with her and Mrs. Bellas, in a place they call Hyde-Park.—When I come back, I will finish my letter. Adieu!

Tuesday morn.

It was so late when I returned yesterday, that I could not keep my word with my dear Eliza;—and, indeed, Mrs. Bellas was so poorly all the evening, that I was in expectation of having some news to tell you that we should all have been glad of.—Mr. and Mrs. Clement are going to Bath as soon as Mrs. Bellas and the little stranger are out of danger. Mr. Clement does not look near so well as when we saw him last at Frogly; and it is on his account they are going there, for the benefit of hot-bathing. Mrs. Bellas has got a very-well-looking nurse from one of the lying-in hospitals, who will either suckle the child if she cannot, or take the charge of attending it if she can. Mrs. Clement's children are grown very fond of me;—Charles is just three years old—Charlotte something more than two—and there is a little baby about six months, whom his mama suckles; the most beautiful little creature you can conceive—he is really so unlike any other child I ever saw, that I can hardly consider him as mortal.—The father and mother seem to have placed all their happiness in him;—I hope they will not lose him;—but he does not seem to me to be calculated for this world—he has all his mother's sensibility about him—sweet fellow! it is a troublesome companion to travel through life with.

Give my love to Henrietta, and my service to Mrs. Collins; and believe me my dear Eliza's

Affectionate sister,

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXVIII.

MISS ELIZA MASON TO MISS MASON.

MY DEAR SISTER,

IF I didn't love you very much I declare I wouldn't write to you.—I have given your letter to Mrs. Collins; for I'm sure it is fitter for her than for me.—I can't imagine how you can be so stupid—you have been in London almost a week, and have never sent me a line about plays, balls, masquerades, nor any of the fine things that London is full of;—not even told me what sort of caps girls of my age wear—though you know that if you cut out one in paper, I could make it directly:—if I was there, I should make better use of my time, I assure you.—We are to have a ball at the parsonage-house, on miss Freeman's birth-day, which is next Tuesday;—young Mr. Barton is to dance with her—and Henry with miss Barton; though I am sure he is very sorry for it; and Thomas is to dance with me, which I am sorry for;—in short, I think we are all very badly matched with partners, except Henrietta, who has master George—and proud enough she is of her partner;—to be sure he is a very pretty boy, but he is not so well-made as Henry;—but because miss Barton will have a great fortune, I suppose the doctor chose to compliment her with his eldest son;—however, it is some pleasure to know he does not like her, as he told me yesterday in the Greenhouse; and said, “he had rather dance with somebody else round a May-pole, than with Miss Barton at the Lord Mayor's ball in London.”—Now, my dear, sweet Sophia, buy me a pretty cap, and send it down by the stage.—I am sure it must be the fault of my dress, if I cannot look better than Miss Barton, for all she has such a fortune—for, I am sure brown hair is prettier than her carrots, though she puts pepper in her powder to make it look dark.—Henrietta says, “she will not ask for a new cap, if you'll send me one”—a conceited thing!—because she is sure of her partner—and so shall I perhaps, if you will oblige your very affectionate

ELIZA MASON.

LETTER XXIX.

MISS MASON TO ELIZA MASON.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

YOU do not know what concern your levity of temper gives me: it is unnecessary for me to say upon what occasion, how much I love you, and that it is not the expence of a new cap that deprives you of one—but, my dear girl, I dare not encourage in you a passion, the gratification of which is not within our circumstances.—You do not see the consequences, which a fondness for dress brings along with it, to women whose fortunes are circumscribed like ours.—Already has this passion (or some other which you should equally guard against) sown in your breast the seeds of envy, jealousy, slander, and even hatred. Even the honest and affectionate concession of your sister, who waiv'd her claim to a new cap, to promote your request, without encroaching on the impartiality which she knew I would practise in all my actions towards you both—even this act of kindness you stigmatize as the offspring of conceit. Oh fie for shame, Eliza!—if she had been capable of conceit, she could not have been capable of such a disinterested action. Would you have made a similar offer, if *she* had wished for a new cap?—not you indeed.—You are now, my dear Eliza, at a dangerous age—the morning of life shews every prospect in the most flattering point of view: beware of viewing your neighbour's fields, his flocks, his house, his garden.—Now, while the sun of youth shines before your eyes, and blinds them in the article of property, they may be beautiful; but they are not *yours*—take care then that you do not gaze till you become enamoured, for, ten thousand to one, they never *can* be yours.—I dare not be more particular; *your* happiness is principally concerned—but I am sufficiently interested in the event, to tremble whilst I write upon the subject. If you would oblige me, you would be as seldom as possible at the parsonage-house—nor can I think it decent to dance in those rooms where we so lately wept over such a father. Henrietta is a child; but at fifteen reason may operate, if passion will give it leave. However, I am still your sister,

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXX.

MISS MASON TO ELIZA.

MY DEAR GIRL,

WHAT effect my last letter, which was dictated by the truest sisterly affection, will have upon your mind, I know not; but as Mrs. Collins, in a letter to her lady, mentions the ball, and does not mention you as one of the party, I own I am flattered with the hope that your own understanding took my side of the question, and determined you to stay at home in a decent retirement, rather than mix in those delights which only happier situations can render truly pleasing.—Mrs. Bellas is brought to-bed, and (thank Heaven) as well as can be expected—but the dear little boy is dead.—She saw

him alive, and apparently well, about an hour after he was born—but he did not live quite twelve hours. They are all in great distress; but her happy equanimity of mind is of great service to her, in supporting her under what I think must be a heavy affliction, though I cannot judge accurately of the feelings of a mother.—Mr. Bellas is exceedingly affected, though in her presence he endeavours to conceal it under a mask of philosophy.—She begins already to talk of returning, and tacitly condemns herself for coming to town at all: however, though they do not tell her so, they all think that she must have stood a bad chance herself in the country. I own, I cannot see why.—Mr. Powell attends several ladies in the parish, who do very well; and I am sure he gave a proof of his knowledge, in his judgement upon Mrs. Bellas, when she had that fall; for he said, “that, if she went out her reckoning, the child would not live.”—I am sure, I am very sorry he happened to be so right in his conjecture on this occasion; but it certainly is a proof of his skill and ability in his profession. I hope, my dear, your silence does not proceed from your being angry with me—believe me, my remonstrances are the dictates of my affection for you.—I know how hard it is to recover the right road, if once we suffer our hearts to go astray. Adieu, my dear! My love to Henrietta; and be assured of the affection of

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXXI.

MISS ELIZA MASON TO MISS MASON.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I Was not angry, but (I cannot tell a story) I certainly was not pleased with your first letter.—Collins knows best why she omitted my being at the ball, for I was there; and, Miss Barton being confined with a swelled face, which I was very glad of—you may be angry if you will—I danced with Henry, who was the best dancer in the set.—Miss Greenway was vastly mortified at not being preferred, as we were told that seniority was to have the precedence; but luckily, you know, she is such a little runt, that nobody could imagine she was older than me; so the prize fell to my lot—not but she had got on high-heel'd shoes, and a new cushion to dress her hair upon, that must have added at least two inches to her height; and then at top of this cushion there was a plume of feathers, that looked as if her grandfather had stolen them off one of the hearses when he had buried the corpse, and bequeathed it to her in lieu of a neck.—She came up to me after we had danced the first country-dance, and, with a sneer, she condoled with me upon the loss of my father; said, “that affliction was a vast enemy to beauty and youth; and that she was at a loss, without that consideration, to account for Doctor Freeman’s mistake, in supposing me older than her;”—and then, turning to Henrietta, she tapped her on the neck, and told her, “that her beauty was beyond the reach of accident.” To be sure, I was not much behind-hand with her; for, perceiving that the petticoat of her robe was so long as to be very troublesome, I condoled with her upon the necessity some people lay under, of hiding their legs at the expence of their convenience.—You know, her father is very absurd about long petticoats and covered necks—so she may either give him, or the *bows* of her legs, the merit of the observation. You grow quite musty, indeed, sister!

ELIZA MASON.

LETTER XXXII.

MISS MASON TO ELIZA.

MY DEAR ELIZA,

WHAT unaccountable whim has taken possession of your brain, to the utter exclusion of all those sentiments of benevolence and social affection, which it was the business of our dear parents to inculcate upon us all?—Rancour and malevolence seem the reigning passions of your heart; and that liveliness, which used to appear so amiable when exerted upon subjects in themselves innocent and inoffensive, is now challenging the enmity of those who used to admire and love you, by putting on the likeness of detraction and malignity. Pray, what proofs have you that Miss Greenway's legs are crooked? or, if you had, by what rule of humanity do you reproach her with what you should pity? Then, why that unwarrantable supposition about her feathers? If I had sent you a new cap, it must have had feathers too.—Does the conscious want of any advantage in ourselves warrant our abuse of those who possess it?—if so, my dear, you may rail at all the young ladies you associate with; for which of them is an orphan so destitute as you! So far I will conceal your folly—though the obligations, we are all under to our present guardians and benefactors, will hardly allow me to consider myself entitled to a thought which shuns their participation. Mrs. Bellas is recovering apace, and proposes, at the close of three weeks, to go to church; and in a day or two after return to Frogly. Mr. and Mrs. Clement set out for Bath next week; and the two eldest children go with us to Frogly: the youngest is not so well as it has been—it had yesterday a convulsion-fit; and Mr. Clement, having taken it into his head that Mrs. Clement's anxiety for some time past has injured her milk, has insisted upon her weaning it.—Pretty creature! I hope it will do well—but the old women in the country would give it up, if they saw the anxiety of the parents about it.—They will set out, I find, on Sunday morning, Mr. and Mrs. Clement, nurse, and the little beauty—they are very fond of all their children; yet they part with the other two with a seeming unconcern, compared with what they feel for the infant.—Desire Mrs. Collins to write to her mistress, and give her an account of the house-linen; particularly those articles which want any addition or alteration; as Mrs. Bellas has lost the memorandum she brought with her. I do not believe I shall write to you any more before I see you; but as we are more apt to remember what we read, than what we hear, allow me, my dear Eliza, to give you an elder sister's caution. Guard well the avenues of that little heart, upon the disposing of which your future happiness or misery depends—here, at a certainty—possibly hereafter. I have perceived, and your letters confirm it, that already you feel a preference; *that* is a step towards making a choice—but, should a person chuse what is not in their power to obtain, and fix their happiness upon that choice—what alternative remains but misery?—Henry Freeman (I must speak plain) is a fine youth; but I think, without prejudice, the best part of him is visible—he seems vain, haughty, and positive in his own opinion.—But grant him all you think him—he is not now his own master; nor does he weigh the value of those words, which to you are confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ. He speaks as he thinks at the moment, perhaps; and the next he thinks of something else—you imbibe with a thirsty kind of pleasure the professions of his mouth, and, when he is absent, treasure them up in your heart. Oh, Eliza! I

speaking from sad experience!—be cautious, and be happy.—Mrs. Bellas desires me to come and read to her. We have got two volumes of a pretty work just published, under the title of “Liberal Opinions:”—there is an elegy on a nightingale, equal to any poem I ever read. Adieu, my dear, ill-judging sister! be wise in time, for your own sake, and that of your affectionate

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XXXIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

Bath.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

WE arrived here last night, after an easy two-days journey; and, bating the teasing circumstance of being hurried away from you, a very pleasant one. Mr. Clement bathed this morning, and has been in very good spirits, and free from pain ever since. I wish he may be able to reconcile himself to staying here as long as will be necessary to compleat his cure; but of that I almost despair, as you know his dislike to every thing that is public, in which he would never mix, but to please me. Bath is now very full; but the rooms, they tell me, are quite out of fashion; and, except on the ball and concert nights, quite deserted for private card-parties at the houses of the inhabitants. The circus and crescent are most beautiful buildings; the latter I think too much exposed, for a place of constant residence—the heat and cold are violent in their turns; yet there are not above five houses uninhabited. I hope to hear that you gather strength—the fine weather is greatly in your favor; yet I must entreat you, not to let your eagerness to return to Frogly make you too venturesome—pray do not leave town till the full expiration of your month—my house, my servants—my every thing is yours; why will you not consider and use them as such, and then you will be at home? Mr. Bellas cannot have finished his business yet; so I hope *that* will detain you a few days; for I know you would even mortify yourself to serve those amiable orphans. Sophia is really a most deserving young woman: I wish it was possible to divert her from that attachment you so much disapprove of; but persons of her grave turn are much more out of the reach of amusement, than others of a more vivacious cast, whose minds, being more apt to catch at variety, suffer a succession of ideas, in themselves ever so different, to take possession, each in their turn, and in their turn disappear, and return no more. If the summer passes without any farther progress being made in the matter, I will ask her to spend the next winter with me in town; and perhaps that may give her mind a different turn: but, of all things, avoid *reasoning* her out of it; for it has been proved, by many an instance of fatal experience, that the ablest head is by no means a match for an infected heart. The pump-room is all in a bustle; every body here knows every body's affairs; and, from the antiquated virgin, who endeavours to make chastity atone for the want of every other virtue—to the pert coxcomb, with pink-sattin heels to his shoes, who does not pretend to any virtue at all—every individual is a self-erected judge of every other person's conduct. It seems, the person who leads the band in the Pump-room has a family of seven or eight children, who are all possessed of very uncommon talents in the musical way—his eldest boy plays solo's, though he can scarce hold the violin; and his eldest girl sings like the music of the spheres; but the old gentleman himself, not choosing to be a mere *non-entity* whilst his family are in the road of contention for fame—has lately distinguished himself by a passion for a pretty plump West Indian—a married lady, who is here for the benefit of the waters—and the delight of admiration; the poor creature is actually (or he counterfeits well) gone mad upon the occasion; and the invalids are obliged to drink their waters without the inspiring sounds of his

fiddlestrings. There is a story of melancholy import in the family, it seems; respecting which an old lady threw out some inuendoes this morning, in the ladies coffee-room (to which I have subscribed, or I should have been nobody): she wanted me sadly to ask her some questions; but I mortified my own curiosity, to punish her propensity to scandal; which, to do this individual justice, is more prevalent here than even in London.

My love to Mr. Bellas and Sophia; and the profusion of a full heart be poured out in blessings on my darling children! Write, my dear Charlotte, and tell me how they look—what they say—whether they grieve for, or have forgotten, thy

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXXIV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I THANK you for your kind remembrance of me. I am much better; and propose returning to Frogly on Monday next, with your two little ones in my train;—would it had pleased heaven to have added mine! but Providence best knows how to dispose of its creatures! Yet, with every degree of submission the human mind is capable of to that great over-ruling power, I am sometimes tempted to enquire, in my own mind, why an existence should be given only to be taken away again?—If man be created, as we are sometimes told, for the purposes of society, why is he not suffered to answer those purposes? what purpose has my little infant answered? he has been born—and—he is dead! Mysterious power! oh, teach me resignation to thy will! nor suffer that reason, which is a possession derived from thee—from thy free gift—to be employed in a rebellious opposition to thy dispensations! Mr. Bellas is very kind in his intention; he conceals the concern which I know he must feel; and thinks, by amusing me, to lessen mine: but, though the reserve of which my nature partakes on all occasions may have operated on my conduct in the present case, my heart is not less susceptible of the feelings of a mother—and the relief I feel, from this partial effusion of my grief, convinces me that the tears of nature should freely flow. I am sorry to be ungrateful; but I think I should have loved Mr. Bellas better, if he had mixed his tears with mine; the loss was mutual—mutual should have been the lamentation:—perhaps I wrong him—I hope I do; but I think there is an unusual coldness in his manner to me of late. You know I am not of a jealous turn—my mind is of a species between that and the confidence which indifference only can inspire; but I do not like his manner towards Sophia, nor the suffusion which spreads on her cheek, when, in common conversation, he makes those appeals to her judgement, and those remarks upon her conduct, which used to be mine alone. I think I was wrong in taking her under my roof;—if my suspicions are just, never let any woman, after me, whose husband is worth losing, take to her bosom a snake that may, even innocently, sting her. I have the highest opinion of Sophia's morals;—I believe she would fall a sacrifice to an improper passion, rather than *resolve* to gratify it; but human nature is, in all its works, imperfect—else, what need of a world after this? here is every thing but—perfection; and, in things inanimate, almost that—it is we, who flatter ourselves with being the noblest, that are the most imperfect work of nature. You may remember the anxiety he expressed about her supposed attachment to Powell—it was more than natural for a man uninterested—men do not, even the best of them, animadvert so severely upon each other's conduct, unless their *feelings* aid their judgement.—However, upon mentioning to him yesterday the paragraph in your letter respecting her, he replied warmly, “Oh dear! there is no occasion for Sophia's being torn from Frogly—she does not feel a propensity to Powell that is worth opposing—it is impossible a girl of her sense should make a choice so unworthy.” My heart filled—I did not venture to say anything, for fear I should say too much. But I will have done with this subject; which perhaps the weakness of my body, and consequently my mind, may represent in a more serious light than it deserves. Your dear little ones are very well—Charles cried for two hours when he missed you; but,

as soon as we got him in a disposition for amusement, we devised little sports, till he was quite as happy as ever, and so has remained; but the dear little Charlotte pays your absence the tribute of a silent tear every time she sits down to table and finds that your place at it is vacant. You have not mentioned Frank; tell me how he is in your next.

Give my love to my brother; and rest assured of the prayers of your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXXV.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I AM exceedingly shocked at the idea you have conceived respecting your husband; because I know you are not apt to entertain new opinions upon slight recommendation to your judgement:—now, if you were as giddy as myself, I should only rattle upon the subject, and so hope to laugh you out of it; but the seriousness of your nature demands more respect, and I must be serious in return. I must however set out with declaring, that I differ totally from you in every point, except the opinion you express of Sophia. I cannot help thinking her truly amiable;—what then have you to fear? Human nature, you say, is imperfect:—true, my dear; but there are many, very many, instances of even imperfect beings, who would shudder at encouraging the passion of a man, the husband of her dearest friend;—Sophia cannot be so base:—it is impossible. You very sensibly account for the present state of your mind; weakened by illness and affliction, we are, the wisest of us, the easy dupe of every plausible appearance. You are hurt at Mr. Bellas's little attentions to Sophia;—but may not that be the consequence of his generous wish to lessen the idea of her dependence, and place her on a footing more comfortable in his family? certainly, my dear sister, it may, and I hope you will see it in that light, and that alone. Let me hear from you again immediately: I would not omit a post, when a subject so important was agitated; so have desired my hair-dresser to wait whilst I scribbled these incorrect lines.—I thank you, my dear; my little cherub is much better; the air seems to work miracles upon him—and Mr. Clement mends every day.

Bless my little darlings in my name; and accept for yourself and Mr. Bellas the truest affection of your

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXXVI.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY dear Marianne's kind endeavours to lessen my anxiety, however new circumstances of conviction prevent the operation of her wishes, has all the thanks I have to bestow. I received your letter just as the carriage came to your door to convey us to Frogly. I was ready.—Sophia, who had been packing up all the childrens playthings in the seat of the coach, was not quite dressed, otherwise we probably should have been set out; however, when the post-man presented a letter, which I knew to be yours, I could not resist the pleasure of reading it—we all stood in the fore-parlour; and Mr. Bellas, upon seeing my cheek flush, I believe, as I read, asked me how you all did.—I said, Pretty well; and put the letter in my pocket, without offering it to him, as I commonly do all the letters I receive:—He only smiled, and said, "Some female secrets, I suppose?"—I replied, "Not very secret;" or some such thing;—and, by my faltering and stammering, made him and Sophia look at one another, I thought, very significantly, and then at me.—However, his delicacy prevented his asking to see the letter; and I thought myself well out of the scrape.—Having taken leave of all your family, I stepped into the coach; and, after Mr. Bellas had put in Charles and Charlotte, he gave his hand to Sophia, who, springing towards the step with, I thought, a guilty sort of sprightliness—turned upon her heel, and wrenched her ankle so violently, that she screamed and fainted.—Mrs. Selby, who stood at the door to make her curtesy, laid hold of her, and led her back to the parlour by Mr. Bellas's assistance; whilst I sat in the coach, almost stunned with my own reflections. About three minutes passed before I recollected that humanity required my taking some notice of the accident; so, desiring Philip to attend to the children, I got out of the coach, and went into the parlour, where I found Selby chafing her foot with vinegar, and Mr. Bellas familiarly supporting her on the sofa where she sat.—I stifled my feeling, and asked her how she did.—She could not look me in the face whilst she answered me.—Mr. Forbes, whom Selby had called in, by this time arrived; and, having declared that it would be injurious to her to take a journey in her present situation, ordered her to bed, and said he would send her something to embrocate the part affected.—Mr. Bellas then called to Philip, and desired him to unload the baggage, and send the coach away.—Now, it is probable I should have done the same, had he left it to me—yet, knowing my anxiety to return to the country, I thought he might have paid me the compliment of consulting me. However, I did not think myself authorized to speak my opinion.—I stayed till she was put into bed; then, taking an opportunity to go up stairs as if to take off my calash, I threw myself on the bed, and gave vent to my tears, and stayed there, without seeing Mr. Bellas, till Selby came and announced dinner. I came down with a heart still heavy enough, unloaded as it had been by three hours draining; and as soon as I saw him, it broke out again.—He asked me, with a dissembled concern, why I wept? and affected to understand it as the effect of my apprehension for her. He assured me, that Forbes had no doubt of her being able to set out in a day or two.—I said, that I should be very well pleased to return to Frogly as soon as possible: and though I am sure he saw my embarrassment, and was not less embarrassed himself, he took no notice of either; and, Philip taking his place, prudence forbad any further appearance of it on my side. We passed the evening without ten words on either side—tea was brought, we drank it, and were still

silent:—supper was served, and we still remained so, each of us amusing ourselves with a volume of Melmoth's "Liberal Opinions." I had the first volume; and, upon reading a passage in the epistle of the unfortunate lady to her parents, I could not help exclaiming, "Good Heaven! who can read thy description of vice, and not start at its first approaches!"—He seemed affected—and pretended, when he found I saw it, to be reading the elegy on the Nightingale, at which you know we have all wept in our turns.—Before I went to bed, I called upon Sophia, and stayed with her till I thought he was asleep.—She seemed once more to be the amiable good girl I thought her.—I really began to chide my own folly, in a thought prejudicial to either her or my husband.—I left her at about one o'clock, and stole softly into bed, where I lay several hours without being able to close my eyes: at last sleep came; and, just as I was going to give it welcome, by hoping that all my fears were vain, Mr. Bellas started, and cried, "I have lost my boy; let me not be deprived of every thing that is dear to me;"—and then, at some distance of time, whilst I was tormenting myself by applying his fears to Sophia's illness (for she had a good deal of fever), he cried, "My wife! my wife!" A new consideration then took place.—Sometimes I thought he uttered those last words with an accent of tenderness—then, the foregoing exclamation might relate to *me*.—*I* had very lately been in greater danger than she could be.—Then again, my fancy, recurring to some of the circumstances so recent in my memory, gave the sound of lamentation, or satiety, to WIFE, and rent my very heart-strings.—I could not sleep—I rose and dressed myself; and, about eight o'clock, went again into Sophia's room.—Her fever was much increased, and her mind seemed to me to be the fountain of her disorder.—At night she became delirious, and has raved incessantly of Mr. Bellas and me ever since.—Mr. Bellas sees my suspicion, which this has strengthened; and, whether from the resentment of affronted virtue, as he would call it, or whether from a conviction that he has nothing to say, we have not spoke these two days.—I shall wait an interval of returning sense, and question Sophia—till then, sleep and rest must be a stranger to your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXXVII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

OH, my dearest sister! why should a wretch like me be all the care of Heaven; and suffering virtue, like Sophia's, be punished with a life of misery? Let no woman, who has not known *her* trials, say her virtue is victorious, nor triumph in a conscious superiority, which accident alone, perhaps, has given them.—I told you in my last, that I would watch an interval of sense, to question her upon the subject which tormented me, and, as I imagined, was the cause of her distraction. Having resolved to be silent for ever to Mr. Bellas till this dreadful uncertainty should be removed, I was glad of an opportunity of sitting up in Sophia's room, without making unnecessary discoveries to the servants.—About ten o'clock on Thursday evening she fell into a fine sleep, from which, Mr. Forbes said, "every thing might be hoped."—Upon this opinion, I sent Selby to bed; and anxious for the moment that should remove suspense, with the fullest confidence in her veracity, I waited her awaking from

slumber.—From ten to four she slept—Mr. Bellas all the while walking about his room, which I sometimes construed into anxiety for Sophia, and sometimes attributed to his tenderness for me, and pity for the state of mind in which he saw me; though his temper (which, if it has any fault, is that of sullenness) would not permit him to speak first towards a reconciliation.—About four she awoke, and seemed greatly agitated; when I almost intuitively brought her a drink, and asked her, with an accent of tenderness, how she felt after her sleep.—She looked up in my face, with an expression in hers which I shall never forget, and answered—“Much refreshed, I thank you, Ma’am.”—I made several efforts to speak to her upon the subject of my misery; but there was a conscious virtue in her countenance, that made me tremble when I attempted it, and told me, that her own ingenuousness, would anticipate my enquiries.—She lay, and seemed to read my countenance for a few minutes; then, raising herself upon her elbow, she looked all round her, and asked me if we were alone.—I answered eagerly, I believe, in the affirmative; and she replied, “Well then, I will discharge my duty.” I took her hand, and began to comfort her, by assuring her how highly I thought of her virtue and her understanding; and that, as I found she had discovered the source of my anxiety, I did not doubt but she would be candid and direct in her answers to my questions, as my future peace depended upon her.—She struggled for some time between her delicacy and her integrity; and then, laying her head down firmly on the pillow, and riveting her eyes upon my face, she replied, “As truth and penitence dwell in my heart, I will.”—I then asked her, “whether Mr. Bellas had ever made any professions of affection to her?”—She sighed, and answered—“I cannot deceive you, Madam—he did.”—Seeing my countenance light up, as I dare say from my own feeling it did—she went on, “but, Madam, Mr. Bellas is guiltless towards you—I am the only wretch!”—Here tears for some minutes kept us both silent.—I spoke first—“My dear unhappy girl, said I, how can a man be guiltless?”—“An *unmarried* man, says she, may surely speak of love—and when superior merit”——My heart was overwhelmed—I was relieved, and yet I doubted.—“I see, continued the poor sufferer, that we shall be interrupted, I will conquer, if I can, my weakness, and whatever the painful task may cost me, give to Virtue—Virtue’s due.—When Mr. Bellas’s father died, I was nine years old, and he fourteen:—our near neighbourhood had made us frequent visitors—and, though a certain haughtiness of temper governed all his other actions—I remember he had often taken me upon his knee, and, with a kiss adopted me his daughter.”—Here she wept a flood, and then went on.—“When he died, he left a wife, a daughter, and a son.—Miss Bellas was nearer to my age than her brother, and had always loved me with a sister’s love; upon this occasion, I was invited to spend a month at the farm, and that month was the foundation for years of misery.—As play-mates, we conversed with the utmost freedom, nor looked to any other joys than those which every hour produced—we walked, we rode, we lived together; and, my memory bids me add—we loved.—At last the period came, when Frank was to be sent to Cambridge.—Our parting was a scene of tears and kisses, innocent as angels give to welcome a new inhabitant of the skies. At stepping into the coach, he took my hand, and pressing it between his—“Sophia, says he, this is *my* property, be careful of it; and as a return take you my heart and this”—putting on my forefinger this ring of mocha, which I have never quitted since.—I, young as I was, told him, I would be sure—and I have kept my word.—At the next vacation-time, he came to Frogly; and the next made no apparent alteration in his heart.—In short, six summers and six winters passed, and still he said he loved me.—Just as he came of age, his sister, who had been the comfort of my

intermediate hours by talking of him to me, took the small-pox, and died—and, about four weeks after, her excellent mother followed her to the grave. Frank was now his own director; and my confidence in his constancy, which could only be equalled by my love, represented him to my fancy every hour, as coming to call upon me for that hand and heart which never could be another's: But—fatal to my hopes!—he came to London to administer, saw you, and forgot the lost Sophia!"—My blood was chilled; I had not power to speak; she wiped her eyes, and then proceeded.—"Just at this time my brother Charles came home, and, in answer to my enquiries after Frank, said, with some affected pleasantry—"He is gone to town, Sophia, and London is the bane of constancy."—I answered with an asperity of which nothing else could have made me capable—"Yes, brother, such constancy as your's—but my Frank is above the reach of accident; nor time, nor place, have power over souls like his."—My brother was silent till I left the room; and then told my father that he had a letter from Frank, in which he confessed a recent passion for a lady of uncommon merit, and that he hoped to marry her.—My father, whose heart was a repository of every virtue, could yet excuse almost every thing in others; he was neither surprized nor angry; but, knowing how firmly my heart was set upon Frank, he thought it his duty to speak with me before I saw him, that I might be prepared to treat him properly.—I never had disguised my feeling to my father; I begged therefore that he would not impose upon me a talk so impracticable, as feigning an indifference I could not feel—that, if he insisted upon my not seeing him, I would obey him; but that we might still hope that my brother was mistaken. My poor father only exclaimed, "Woman! woman!"—and changed the subject. Soon after this, my dear mother, affected I really believe by my sufferings, fell ill, and died.—Mr. Powell was just come into the parish, and had attended her; and, in the course of her illness, took particular pains to recommend himself to me. My father would not speak; but he wished he might succeed; and I, to gratify his wishes, tried to transfer my affection from him who slighted, to him who sought it; but, in the conflict, my peace, my self-approbation, was lost, and nothing gained. I had loved—had not, at a certainty, lost the object, and could not love again.—At last, after an absence of eighteen months, Mr. Bellas came down.—I saw him pass—but it was to prepare for your reception.—I heard the business of his errand, and had sufficient power over myself to avoid him—but still I loved.—He married you, brought you home—I visited you, admired you, applauded his choice—but still I found I loved him.—But now a new scene opened to my tortured fancy—hitherto my love was folly—now it was guilt!—My father's continual exhortations—Mr. Powell's attentions—my own conviction—all concurred to banish from my heart its tyrant; when my father's death, and his consequent goodness to me, which I verily believe had no source but benevolence, replaced him there again, and brought me to the gates of death.—When I recovered—your kindness relieved me from one source of anxiety, by shewing me that you did not suspect me.—But when your charity towards three helpless orphans induced you to ask us to your house, what perplexity can equal mine!—To comply, was ruin to my peace—to refuse, was to involve my innocent sisters in the punishment of my crimes; and, till our little inheritance was ascertained, we had no alternative. Ever since, I have lived in the horrors of despair—conscious guilt has weighed me down; and, unless absolved by you, I can neither dare to live nor die."—Here Selby gave us a seasonable interruption. Adieu!

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XXXVIII,

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I WISH you had not sent me a partial account of your affecting scene with Sophia. I have cried myself into a nervous fever about the dear unhappy girl—yet I know not what portion of pity or of blame to bestow upon your husband.—Hang Selby! her impertinent intrusion has left me in a state of suspense the most painful I ever felt.—What shall we do with the amiable unfortunate? for, at all events, she must not live with you.—You should consider it as a duty to her, as well as your husband's virtue and your own peace, to resolve upon that: and yet, she must not be distressed.—Mrs. Colville, the sprightly Creole I once mentioned to you, is here; and was telling me the other day, that she intends in August to leave England for about three years; in which time she means to make the tour of Europe. A Gentleman and his sister accompany her; and she said that she should be very happy in finding a fourth, of amiable disposition, and an improveable mind, to go at her expence.—Now, if Sophia could be sufficiently known to her, I am sure she would like her exceedingly. Suppose you send her down to me with Charlotte? I think the journey would do them both good; and I will immediately introduce her to Mrs. Colville, who is really a benevolent good woman, in spite of the unexpected possession of a fortune enough to turn another body's brain; for it seems she was a woman of no original, but carried over to the West Indies as a governess or companion to a young lady, where she married one of the richest planters on the Island; and, in about four months, became a widow, with the consolation of fifty thousand pounds—which she has used to the effecting of many valuable purposes; and the young lady whom she accompanied having married very unhappily, she every New-year's day sends her a present of a bank-note of a very considerable value. Mr. Clement has had a severe attack of a bilious complaint, to which he has been subject many years; and will therefore be obliged to lengthen his stay here a week or two;—if therefore you can send Sophia down directly, I shall have time to effect her introduction to Mrs. Colville. We have a great number of people of fashion here at present, and a proportionate quantity of scandal. Matches in abundance are in agitation, that the parties themselves know nothing about—and work cutting out for Doctors Commons by some others who this very time last year eloped to Scotland. Dress rages like an influenza—and it is more than probable that the *feathers* of our common poultry will in a year or two sell for more than the flesh; for it is impossible that foreign birds can supply the increasing demand. The company seem in a continual state of fluctuation; new faces appear every morning, and old ones vanish. The first ball-night the new comer is distinguishable by the *moderation* of her head-dress; but in the course of her stay, though it be but a fortnight, she seldom fails to strike a bold stroke to be foremost; particularly if she happens to be old or ugly; for then it absolutely depends upon the number and size of her feathers, whether or not she has a chair at the card-tables, or a chance of being known by a single creature in the ball-room.—There is a story somewhat similar to that you have sent me, which engrosses the attention of the better part of the company here—only that the lady has not the comfort of recollecting that her attachment took place when her villainous lover was single. His name is M——; he has, it seems, for many years, took every method of conciliating her affection, without once alarming her virtue; and even made

his wife, who is a very pretty silly woman, subservient to his purposes;—very lately, however, being weary of his *platonie* system, he threw off the disguise, so far as to open her eyes to his villainy and her own danger.—Her mind, naturally amiable and virtuous, sunk beneath the discovery; and, despairing of a victory perhaps over herself by the force of reason and self-conviction, she contrived, the other night, in the absence of her family, to swallow laudanum.—An adventurous knight, who, being in M——’s confidence, had an opportunity of betraying his designs, has contrived to disappoint her intention, by applying instantly an antidote to the poison; and has fulfilled his own, in carrying the unhappy lady to Calais.

MARIANNE.

LETTER XXXIX.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY dear sister need not chide me for pausing at the period—beyond which I was not able to go;—for consider, my dear Marianne, if you are so much affected at reading, how I must feel at writing on the subject!—The poor girl was so exhausted by the time Selby came, that I thought she would have fainted away. I desired her to give her some barley-water, and to go and prepare breakfast.—She understood me, I believe, and immediately went out of the room. As soon as I thought her able to answer me, I told her—that, with respect to those feelings of hers which formerly were innocent, and were *now* rendered otherwise *only* by situation, I did not doubt but she stood acquitted by heaven, if she endeavoured to labour against them—that it was a very clear case to me she did so, and that those conflicts occasioned her illness.—She shook her head in acquiescence, sighed piteously, and was going to speak; but I chose to spare her, and went on—I assured her, that she had lost nothing in my opinion—that I held her entirely clear of offence against me; but that, if she thought otherwise, she had my free pardon.—She blessed me for the comfort I had given her; and begged, that if I had any remaining doubts respecting Mr. Bellas, which could affect my future happiness with him, I would ask any questions I chose, and rely upon her, as she hoped for mercy in another world, for the veracity with which she would give me an answer. I then recapitulated the observations I have made to you—begged of her to account for the coolness which she must have observed latterly in his conduct towards me—and asked her whether they had had any private conversation, and upon what subjects?—She confessed, that she had perceived an alteration in his manner; but believed it was at first the gloominess which was occasioned by the loss of our little infant; and, since that, a resentment of a supposed sulkiness in me—that she had known his temper, and studied it many years, and found that he always resented coolly—that she believed he very sincerely loved me; but that, if I was not quite so retired in my disposition, perhaps it would be better;—that his mind was rather apt to stagnate, and that my dislike to variety of company rather increased than remedied that disease—hoped I would pardon her dictation—but that it was very possible to be *too good*.—I then repeated my question, whether they had conversed in private since we had been married? she answered, “Yes, ma’am, once; and upon this very subject; but I then found my mind so weak, and so fatally inclining to hopes that were improper, that I resolved never to hazard a second conversation.”—“But did he speak of his former affection for you; and lament his change in my favor?” “No, madam; it would be a baseness I am not capable of, to say he did:—he is an excellent man, and all your own; long may the happy union last! and never more may even its momentary intercourse be soured by the remembrance of a wretch like me!—but, after what I have told you, do not suffer me to be exposed to daily sin—do not ask me to your house—nor think me ungrateful if I beg to be forgotten as I would forget!—my peace of mind requires the sacrifice—I esteem, I reverence, I value you—but I love your husband.—Time may enable me to preserve and cherish the one feeling, and conquer the other; at present they are inseparable—absence may aid time—permit me to make the trial.”—I took out your letter; and, modelling your request so as to prevent its appearing like an act of necessity, I told her, that, as soon as she was well, I would entrust Charlotte to her care, to convey to you. She rejoiced exceedingly, and seemed

half restored to health by the prospect. By this time it was nine o'clock; and Mr. Bellas, who had done hard duty about the room till six, rang his bell—I ran into his room, and found him in a great chair dressed as I parted from him the night before. After Sophia's declaration, I thought I owed him a concession, which I lost not a moment in making;—he was greatly softened; and only said, "Let us both forget it, Charlotte, and endeavour to spend our future time more pleasantly."

Sophia's thanks accompany our love; she will bear that, and your sweet girl, I hope, in safety to you.

I am (once more)

Your happy sister,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XL.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

ACCEPT, my dear sister, the congratulations of a heart that palpitates to every emotion of thine! Convinced of your husband's innocence, your friend's virtue, and, what would flatter some women much more, the triumph of your own victory; never let me hear that you are grave again.—And now, my dear, since Sophia has begun, let me strengthen the opinion she has advanced.—You really are too good.—Mr. Bellas certainly loves you, and you merit his tenderest regard; but I have often trembled for the consequences of your dislike to all those little fooleries, you chuse to call them so, which, by interrupting your *tête-a-tête* now and then, would give you both a double relish to it when you were of necessity alone.—Mr. Clement would have been just such a *good domestick man* as you are a woman; but do you think I should have loved him half so well if he had persisted in it, as I do now for his having relaxed a little to indulge me, till by degrees he got a something like an inclination to it himself? Lord! my dear, your billing and cooing days are, nay they must be, over.—Do not be frightened, Charlotte; I love my husband, and he loves me, as well as you and your swain can do, for your lives—but does that imply that we should love nothing else?—believe me, that is the language of romance, this of reason;—and I will maintain it, that two of the best people in the world may sit at home, till they grow tired of themselves and of each other.—We were born for society; why should we impertinently set up a nature, and a set of laws, of our own? You cannot imagine how much it is in our own power to alter what we call our natural dispositions.—We imbibe habits early in life, and that we call nature—but we are deceived:—it is at the option of almost every one we converse with, particularly if we love or admire them, to give a bent to our inclinations;—for instance—I used to detest cards—and comment with great *wisdom* upon the absurdity of rational creatures finding amusement in ranging a certain number of pieces of painted paper in their hands, and, having first stamp'd upon them a pecuniary value, giving them the additional power of torturing them almost to madness;—yet, to oblige Mr. Clement, I condescended to study *this* very art of being ridiculous; and, for aught that I can see, with all my former wisdom about me, am not less conspicuous in the science than those who learnt to distinguish the *mattadores* with their alphabet.—Then, Mr. Clement used to love the same set of Mr. and Mrs. C——, and Mr. and Mrs. D——, and never desired to see a soul he could not value and esteem, and all that.—Lord! at that rate, one might as well wear one *sacque* all the winter, because it was not worn *out*—*and* wear it till one ceased to value it, for its very service.—Now, I own that in my heart I love your honest simple pairs mightily—but then I like now and then to see people of less merit, if it were only to enable me to give—as poor Sophia said—to give to Virtue, Virtue's due.—Oh, Charlotte, here is a packet from the compting-house, enclosing a letter from Amelia.—She tells me that she has gotten pretty far in her history—but that she is almost ashamed to send it, on account of its extreme length.—She says, that, when she set about it, she was in hopes a few pages would contain all the incidents of her insignificant life—but that she found very often so many *little* circumstances aiding one action—which yet, in justice to that action, must necessarily be set down, that she feared it would extend infinitely beyond my patience to peruse it, considering how uninteresting it must be to any second person;—that she had a

great inclination to ask my permission to decline the prosecution of it—but that my commands to proceed should be obeyed, however painful the recollection of many necessary parts of the contents.—I shall write to her tomorrow.—I am now going to the concert, which however is not much worth going to, now the sweet warbler is torn from the nest; and all the rest of the brood cannot compensate for her loss.—The old maids are very prophetick on this occasion; they say, nothing but marrying her *guardian* on this journey can save her honor.—It may be mighty good for her honor—but it will be very bad for her happiness, if she has half the sensibility she is allowed by all who knew her.—The man who could first be the **confident** of another in his villainous designs upon an innocent, an amiable girl—then, at a proper season, betray that confidence, just as the poor girl had recovered a large sum of disappointment-money from an old fool, to whom she was on sale by her relations—who could let her be in the last moment of danger before he made the discovery, that she might have no alternative but flying with him—and take advantage of that situation to marry her, knowing that her whole soul was another's, even the very man's whose confidence he had infamously accepted, and as infamously betrayed;—such a man, though he wrote sentiment like an Addison, or spoke it like a Cato, must be void of every *real* feeling of honor or honesty, and therefore incapable of being a good husband.—Mr. Clement is just returned from taking an airing, with nurse and our little angel, over Land's-down—they are both much better; and I hope we shall all meet in August, the happier for those little storms that have for some past months obscured our domestick joys.—Of all things, my dearest Charlotte, avoid unwarrantable—aye, or even warrantable suspicions of your husband;—no man will bear it; and he, perhaps, less than almost any other.—You grave and good people are the most dangerous to offend—it is the imperfection of *human* goodness, to make its conscious worth an argument of want of mercy to those who are deficient.—Not so the perfection of divine goodness—there mercy and forgiveness meet together, and righteousness and compassion are inseparable companions.—I suppose Sophia and Charlotte will be here by Sunday. Mrs. Colville goes to Bristol (for a week) on Monday; and I should wish her to see Sophia before she goes—I like her every day more and more; and should be very glad to hear of her altering her place on every account but Sophia's; but I think travelling will be the best medicine for her disorder. Mr. Clement's brother is expected from the East Indies every day.—I hear so many amiable things of him, that I long to see him almost as much as you do your

MARIANNE.

LETTER XLI.

MISS MASON TO MRS. BELLAS.

DEAR MADAM,

IN obedience to your obliging commands, I should have wrote the moment I arrived; but really I was very ill for a few hours previous, and several hours after.—Mrs. Clement had it not in her power to give me a bed in the same house; so I am obliged to lodge at a millener's in the church-yard, and to come here early in the morning. Miss Clement, who got to her journey's end without fatigue, is very well; and her mama is so good as to let her sleep with me; which makes the disagreeable circumstance of a divided habitation less irksome.—Mr. Clement seems a very gay man, I think, to what he used to be—perhaps the return of health gives him unusual spirits—we seldom, any of us, indeed, know how to prize a blessing, till we are in danger of losing it. He looks vastly well, and I think behaves much better to Mrs. Clement than ever he did in town. This is a very busy, and, at the same time, a very idle place;—the people are in such a bustle under the window where I write (on the south parade), that it would appear to me as a place of business—but the moment I look in the faces of the company, I can see, without much penetration, that a pursuit of pleasure is the utmost of their views.—I have gone thus far, without saying a word upon the melancholy subject next my heart—it is still in the same place; and I believe the best remedy I can apply will be forgetfulness: I have tried reason and argument to the utmost of my ability—that has failed—time and absence may, nothing else can relieve me from an attachment fatal to my peace, as it was once the innocent comfort of my life. Henceforth, then, I will be silent on the subject, cost what it will. I will write to my sisters next post; and, if I go abroad, take leave of them for ever—if not, I must endeavour to find some honest method of adding to my little the requisite means of support; and, in all situations, remain, dear madam, your most grateful

SOPHIA MASON.

LETTER XLII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

WE arrived at the Farm about the same time that Sophia reached Bath, being prevented by an untoward accident, which happened to one of the horses, from setting out till next day: as soon as it was known in the village that we were come home without Sophia, various conjectures were formed on the occasion—however, Mr. Powell thinking himself warranted to enquire into particulars, he first sent to know how we did; and then called himself, and begged to see me. After the usual civilities, he asked, when Miss Mason would be at Frogly?—I told him, that was uncertain—that at present she was with you at Bath. He seemed greatly hurt, did not endeavour to conceal it—and, having requested your address, took his leave, intending, I suppose, to write to her.—Soon after he was gone, I had Sophia’s letter; and am sorry to find she has not seen your friend, as I should be happy to know she was out of Powell’s reach.—I don’t know why, but I dislike that man vastly; so does Mr. Bellas; and yet there is a something very pleasing in both his person and his manner—but I feel a prejudice, that even the distinguished passion he declares for an amiable woman (which is certainly a strong recommendation of him) cannot remove.—He took Henrietta on his knee, gave her sweet-meats, and told her, “that, if she was as good as her eldest sister, every body would love her as he did.” There is another apothecary set up here; who has, it seems, got most of the parish out of Powell’s care—he is a younger man still; but he has a manner towards the servants and labouring people, that has endeared him to every body. Now, whether Powell thinks an alliance with Sophia would strengthen his interest, or whether he really loves her, I cannot decide—but it runs in my head he will have her, though I wish, and shall labour, against it.—She told me, “that she had endeavoured to transfer her affection from him who slighted, to him who sought it;” so that by her own account he stood *second* in her opinion; and, having set in earnest about forgetting the first, perhaps he may stand a better chance than he deserves.—You may think me obstinate, if you please—but I cannot agree with you in respect to the choice of one’s company—when I can ascertain a pleasant evening with Mrs. Greenway, or a useful one by myself; why should I, for variety, sacrifice three hours to Mrs. Barton’s ostentatious display of fine cloaths and expensive laces; or Mrs. Paget’s still more ridiculous passion for talking of herself, her husband, her servants, and her cats?—Mr. Bellas is of the same disposition; and *that*, I should think, a reason for my perseverance, rather than for changing my system.—Similarity of tempers has ever been said to be an omen of happiness; but you love to take the side of the question difficult to support; and, indeed, my dear Marianne, with your happy flow of language, I do not wonder at the singularity of your design.—You certainly have wrought wonders upon Mr. Clement; but then you brought him only to be more like yourself;—as nature has done all that business for me, I think I must endeavour to be content.—So far, however, you have converted us *both*, that we resolve to spend four months of every future winter in London. Now I hope you will be quiet; and when we are there, let us see you and Mr. Clement as often as you can; a few other friends (still select ones) may be admitted; and once or twice a week, when good plays are acted, we may devote our evening to

Drury-lane or Covent-garden.—As to your masquerades, your insipid Pantheon, and the absurd kind of mixture called a route—there you must dispense with my attendance; and allow me to think a review of the illustrious dead a more rational source of delight than the company of the light, the superficial, and the idea-less living.

Mr. Bellas's love accompanies that of,

Your ever affectionate,

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XLIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

ALL our schemes for poor Sophia are at an end.—I told you that Mrs. Colville meant to spend a week at Bristol: but the little gypsy has cheated us all; and, under that pretence, has made a transfer of herself and her fifty thousand to a young clergyman, to whom, it seems, she was attached previous to her leaving England.—If he be as deserving as a gentleman who told me of the circumstance describes him to be—or if she thinks him so—I shall love her always for her disinterested preference of him to several *mighty pretty gentlemen*, and some with good estates, who are left here in a state of the most ridiculous disappointment.—His name is Baker; he is of a Devonshire family.—Mrs. Colville, whose maiden name was Chandler, was the daughter of a reputable tradesman, and brought up at a boarding-school at Exeter as a half-boarder, where she was taught all those ridiculous accomplishments which serve but to *dis*-qualify a woman for the very end of her creation—that of being a good wife and a good mother; for what business has an English tradesman's wife with the knowledge of French? and how is it to be expected that a girl, who has spent the first sixteen years of her life in learning music, dancing, drawing, &c. should descend to the domestic duties of her kitchen and her nursery?—Hence the many bankruptcies amongst the husbands of those who do marry men of business, the only people who are likely to marry them!—and hence the number of unhappy girls who pay for an improper education with the expence of their happiness, their innocence, and their fame!—Miss Chandler, however, was more fortunate.—At this school there happened to be a miss Benson, who had been sent over from Barbadoes for an English education, and committed to the care of some relations at Exeter. It happened that she was in the number of those ladies whom miss Chandler was, by the duties of her situation, to dress and undress;—this brought on an intimacy; and, she being a very pretty, humble, and yet gentlewoman-like kind of girl, miss Benson and her relations became so fond of her, that, when Mr. Benson sent for his daughter home, in order to marry her to a young planter of great property, miss Chandler was requested to accompany her, under the conduct of a black female slave, who was sent over on the embassy.—Mr. Baker, who was the son of another tradesman in the same city, was, at this time, an admirer of miss Chandler; but his mother, who, it seems, had been educated as a *whole* boarder at this very school, and had adopted a sufficient stock of folly and idleness to ruin her husband, was so shocked at the meanness of his ideas, in thinking of a girl who was a kind of a domestic by being obliged to dress and undress four of her school-fellows, that she forbid him to pursue the matter, on pain of her displeasure—nay, her curse.—Miss Chandler had too generous a passion for her lover, to suffer him to hazard a parent's disapprobation; she therefore accepted very cheerfully her young friend's invitation.—At taking leave, her lover pressed her much to promise him that she would never marry any other person; and bound himself, by the most solemn ties, to observe a similar fidelity.—She very prudently declined taking any vow; and released him from his; which, however, he never violated;—but soon after being presented with a living of about seventy pounds a year in Cornwall, resided there, without ever quitting his parish, till she with a generosity which even

her disappointed lovers admire, wrote to him an account of her situation, and a frank offer of herself and fortune, reserving only a charge of five hundred pounds a year to be paid during life to her friend; who, having disliked the husband which her father had provided for her, chose one for herself, who ran through his own fortune upon the strength of his expectations from her father; and, being disappointed in his hopes, had left her with one child, and ready to lie-in of another, destitute of the comforts, nay, almost of the necessaries of life.—Since she parted from her, she had sent her frequent presents; but, upon her marriage, she chose to put it out of the power of accident to interfere with her kindness to her. I wanted you to love her—now I am sure you will.

Every body here sends love, with that of your

MARIANNE.

LETTER XLIV.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

SO, here is a letter from Mr. Powell. Do you know that I believe you wrong the poor man amongst you? You may talk of the wickedness of London as much as you will; but I say a little country village, with but two old maids in its whole vicinity, will produce and circulate more scandal than is to be found in the whole metropolis.—I assure you, I like his letter vastly; and I believe so does somebody else. Mr. Clement says, it will do;—for my part, I am giddy enough; but I never give advice unasked—*that*, I think, is the extreme of folly and impertinence; but, if Sophia asks my opinion, I shall be in danger, my good, grave sister, of getting into the opposition; though, perhaps, like Sir Francis Wronghead, I may say “Yes,” when I should say “No.”—Mr. and Mrs. Baker return here, it seems, as soon as their lodgings in the Circus are ready:—whilst she was single, she lodged in the Abbey Green, dressed very plain and neat—kept but one man-servant, and no carriage, nor even chair; in short, took every decent and proper method of avoiding particular notice—an evident proof of the goodness of both head and heart. But now she means to enjoy her fortune: I find she has bespoke a carriage; but ordered the field to be left vacant till she returns.—I believe I shall grow very fond of her.—Now, don’t you be jealous—nature, and your own worth, will always maintain your superiority—but there certainly is a vast pleasure in admiring acts of generosity.—I do not know how to express myself;—but I think that it is a selfish feeling too—whilst we give great applause to others for any of their actions, we at least hope to have it believed that we should have done the same in a similar situation.—Whom do you think I met this morning, as I came from the pump-room?—that wretch Merrisford. He was be-laced and be-ruffled to the most hideous degree, and had a woman with him in the shape of a wife—she seemed indeed much better calculated for him than poor Amelia; for her very morning-apron was trimmed with Brussels lace—and her hat and cloak were so bedizened, so many tassels, and flowers, and feathers—and, after all, so unlike a gentlewoman, that I could not help thinking *she* had been to Turkey too, to make eighty thousand pounds of her merchandize:—they lodge on the South-parade, I believe, for I saw them go into a house there at noon; and I am sure they cannot visit any body—but their landlady!—Sophia is gone with nurse and the two children to take an airing;—for my

part, I never can find time to go any where, but to walk the **same** round—of the King's Bath—the Cross Bath—the Pump-room—the Parades, in the morning; and to the concert, ball, or card party, in the evening. Charlotte, this would be the best place in the world to spoil you a little—you cannot think what good it would do you.—Yet, I assure you, we are vastly pious here too—it would be as ungentle as wicked to miss the Abbey of a Sunday. Sophia, who is a little confined in her notions, thinks it very inconsistent, I find, to go to church in the morning, and play at cards in the evening—and yet the little prude will sit behind my chair, and look so wise when I am going to play alone without the possibility of a trick beyond the five mattadores, as to save me nine times out of ten by the wrinkle she makes between her eyebrows.—I am absolutely ruined, since I have been here, in my personalities—a whole year's pin-money gone in two months!—and I cannot bear to call upon Mr. Clement for any thing, so must make a retreat as decent as I can; for we set out the latter end of next week at farthest.—Sophia is gone up into my little closet, to answer Mr. Powell's letter, and to write to her sisters. I dare say she will be very sentimental on the occasion; but, if I have any spirit of prophecy about me, she will be Mrs. Powell at last. Mean time, she shall stay with

Your ever affectionate,

MARIANNE.

LETTER XLV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR SISTER,

I WAS prevented from writing to you all last week by a very painful swelling in one of my fingers; which an old woman at last has cured, to the disgrace of both our apothecaries, who played *their* tricks till they almost drove me out of my senses.—It is still weak, so you must excuse my being laconic; though you really are so liberal a correspondent, that I am ashamed to send you a bit of blank paper in return for your entertaining letters.—Mr. Bellas wanted sadly to be employed on the occasion; but I thought you would fancy something more serious than the fact.—Charles is a most enterprising young genius—he delights Mr. Bellas so much, that I do not know how you will contrive to get him away;—should we never have one of our own, it would be kind in you to let us graft him upon our hearts thus early; so might a sister's bounty compensate the severe decrees of fate.—Sophia has never wrote to her sisters since she has been at Bath, though she proposed it when she wrote to me. Eliza is grown so great a favourite at Dr. Freeman's, that I seldom have her at home;—I tremble for the consequences—she certainly grows very fond of Henry;—his family must see it as well as I.—Mr. Bellas has several times talked of placing her with a relation of his in London, who is a chamber-milliner in vast estimation, of an amiable disposition, and mother of a large family. She expresses no dislike to the proposal;—but I think she does not like to leave Frogly, at least till Henry Freeman goes to Cambridge, which will be, I suppose, after the next vacation. I am amazed at the Doctor, who is a very ambitious man, for encouraging an intimacy between two young people so circumstanced:—What can it end in? Miss Freeman too is a very sensible girl; she sees the many contrivances of Henry and George to get Eliza and Henrietta to be of all their little parties; and yet does not seem to foresee any thing consequent thereupon.—When you come to town, be sure you write to your

CHARLOTTE.

LETTER XLVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY dear Charlotte shall keep my Charles till she has one of her own; but make haste, for I cannot spare him long, sweet fellow! I am glad you have him for a pattern.—Sophia is in the greatest tribulation at her sister's not having received her letter, which she says she wrote according to her declaration made previously to you. If I divine aright, she would be much more concerned for her last packet to Frogly, should that miscarry; but our Francis was employed on this occasion, and he is accustomed to think letters of so much consequence, that the love-sick Mr. Powell may expect his fate at a certainty before you receive this.—I am going this evening to make Mrs. Baker's bridal-visit.—All the respectable people at Bath (inhabitants and all) do the same. We do not set out till Monday, so that I probably shall write to you once more from hence;—if so, I will give you my opinion of the fortunate Parson.—I have this moment a letter from Mrs. Belmour; which is only the second I have had since I have been here;—it is amazing to me, that a woman, who has such an easy flow of very elegant language in conversation, should have such a dislike to writing;—she writes a beautiful hand, is perfectly grammatical, provokingly correct—and—that's all.—We hear of men who were great orators and very indifferent writers;—and of others, who excelled in writing, and could scarcely speak English in a mixed company;—but women of a lively imagination, a refined taste, and a good education, particularly if that has been aided by keeping good company, seldom fail to speak and write, at least moderately well.—For my own part—(one cannot forget *self* in any thing) I always premise to my correspondents a happy ignorance of grammatical rules; nor do I know (exactly) the difference between a comma and semicolon.—I have a redundancy of ideas, and a tolerable ear; a wish to be entertained myself, and to entertain my friends:—add to these, a love of the goose-quill; and my whole stock of literary accomplishments pass in review before you. If any good sort of body should condemn my performance for this reason, I hope they will do me the justice, never to eat a pudding that is not made according to the rules laid down in “The Art of Cookery.”—My hair-dresser waits. Adieu!

MARIANNE.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.