

THE
OFFSPRING
OF
FANCY,
A NOVEL.

By A LADY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE
OFFSPRING
OF
FANCY.

LETTER XLVII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

I NOW present my dear Charlotte with my farewell epistle from Bath.—To-morrow morning at six o'clock we set forward—we go in the post-coach on account of Sophia, and leave our chaise to convey Mr. and Mrs. Baker, who are to spend a month with us, and then proceed to visit their Devonshire cousins.—Mrs. Baker (the elder) is still alive; but I believe the young man is under no great apprehension of her displeasure at present, though he has married the very woman for whom three years ago she threatened him with her curse.—Such is the transforming power of money! I often think, that we must appear a very absurd and contemptible set of beings in the eyes of that species of purity, whom we consider as the medium between us and perfection; and whom we may suppose to be strangers to the use of money.—Does a man break his word—ten to one it is money;—a woman her vows to a deserving lover—rely upon it, it is money;—in short, we not only direct our own actions, but judge of those of others through this sole medium—it is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end:—take away that consideration; and the pursuits, the anxieties, and almost all those actions which we dignify by the title of prudence—would be set in a light so ludicrous, that manhood must blush for itself.—Yet, on the other hand, many useful and laudable undertakings would be damped—genius often lie buried—and industry go unrewarded—and generosity, that most glorious of all human virtues, would lose one mode of exertion.—Upon the whole then, it is not money, but the fools who set an improper value on it, that should be held up to ridicule and contempt—for, without money, Mrs. Baker had not been able to shew distinction to merit in obscurity; nor Mr. Baker's virtues, however bright in themselves, been either so useful or so conspicuous, fixed amongst the tin-mines in Cornwall, as they will now—set in gold.—I think I never met with a more agreeable man—destitute of the advantages of having mixed in the world, he comes from amongst peasants with the polish of a courtier; an indisputable proof, that politeness is as natural as any other grace of mind or person—true, easy, elegant, unaffected politeness, I mean; for that buckramized stiffness, which the generality of boarding-schools mistake for politeness, is no more like it, than the terrifying grimace of methodism is like true religion, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths peace. Sophia says, she has given Mr. Powell no hopes; on

the contrary, that, sensible as she was of the generosity of his proposals, she thought herself bound to be ingenuous in declaring her intentions, which, it seems, at present are, never to marry.—I am not apt to ask questions, you know: however, you had given me such a shocking character of the poor man, that I sadly wanted to find a counterpoise in “the generosity of his proposals,” as Sophia called them. She saw I was curious—so she gave me his letter, of which she had read a part to me before;—he is very pathetick on the subject of her cruelty, in coming down to Bath, instead of returning to his impatient wishes—hopes she will pardon his reminding her of the good fortune he had to stand well with her worthy father; and that, though he would wish to have been able to recommend himself, yet he would for the present rest upon that, and leave it to his future conduct to merit her approbation; that, if there was any mode of disposing of the two younger ladies, that could be furthered and promoted by her third of the little provision that was left, he should be happy in relinquishing his pretensions to it, whenever she blessed him with her hand;—or, if she preferred having her sisters brought up under her own care, his house was open for their reception. Now, Charlotte, don’t you think this man must have a heart? and that Sophia should rejoice at having made a conquest of it?—Not a bit—she resolves never to marry—sly baggage! I don’t believe a word of it—I told her so—she blushed, and said, “O ma’am, it is my duty to resolve so.”—I understood her; but sacred are all the communications of my Charlotte to her

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R XLVIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

I HAVE such a packet of news for my dear Charlotte, that I quite long to set about the conveyance of it.—In the first place, we are all come home safe and well, for which I am sure you join with me in gratitude to heaven: next, Mr. James Clement is arrived—a sweet young man; my heart instantly gave him a brother's place:—and, last of all—(though perhaps that is no news to you)—Mr. Powell is in town, and has sent to ask permission to wait upon Miss Mason.—We were at breakfast when the message was brought; it was upon a card, uncovered, so Francis had all the enjoyment of a verbal message.—He gave it to Sophia; she blushed, and gave it to me—and sent her eyes after it, to enquire my sentiments.—However, I always think it right to make a final appeal to Mr. Clement; so I gave it into his hand, and asked what answer Sophia should send?—He smiled, and bad her consult her nearest neighbour—at the same time laying his hand significantly on his heart.—Francis asked, “is there any answer, ma'am?”—“Yes says she, I think I will write one.”—So she went out of the room, and returned with a card, on which she had written the following words: “Miss Mason's compliments; were she in her own house, should be happy to see any of her friends from Frogly; but at present hopes to be excused, as she is on a visit.”—Mr. Clement called her a little hypocrite—and said to Francis, “My compliments, and beg the gentleman will do me the favour to dine here at four o'clock.”—She seemed greatly embarrassed, but not displeased;—and, as a corroboration of my opinion, she is just come down in a new silver gray lutestring, which she made up at Bath, and in which, I assure you, she made more conquests than another country simpleton would have known how to manage; but either she has less passion, or more prudence, than any girl of two-and-twenty I ever knew.—Mr. Powell is come, and dinner just ready; in the evening I will give you an account of their interview; mean time, digestion wait on appetite, and health on both!

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R XLIX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MR. Powell staid till seven o'clock; and, just as he went away, Mrs. Belmour came, and brought a Miss Dean, who is on a visit at her house; so I could not snatch a moment of yesterday evening to give you the scene I promised you.—All this morning, I have had how'd'ye's, in such abundance, that I was obliged to leave the gentlemen to their walnuts and port, and steal this hour between dinner and tea.—After the usual civilities from stranger to stranger, Mr. Clement and I having taken our places, Miss Mason on my right, and Mr. Powell on my left; we sat down to dinner—the lovers eat but little, and spoke less.—As soon as the servants were gone, and the wine and fruit laid down, Mr. Clement began a conversation about you and my brother—expatiated on the charms of Frogly;—the weather, the politicks, and the scandal of the day, all took their turns;—still silent on the subject of their hearts, they faintly mixed in every other.—At last, I mentioned Mr. Bellas's intention towards Eliza—then Mr. Powell began;—said, “he was sure Mr. Bellas meant for the best; but that Eliza was so lively in her manner, that he should be very apprehensive of disagreeable consequences, if she were sent amongst strangers; but most of all in London, where youth, particularly females, were exposed to every temptation; that he should think no place so proper for the young ladies, as that which should include their sister's care; that, having been accustomed to look up to her as a parent, her influence might be strengthened, by being continued; and that, though he thought highly of the natural disposition of all the family, he was of opinion, that the precepts of their excellent parents could no way be inculcated so happily, as by the example of their sister; that he should be happy in giving his assistance; and that his house was open to them, as his heart was to Miss Mason herself;—that he was ill qualified to speak upon a subject on which he felt so much—but that, as she knew his happiness was in her gift—he hoped she would be generous in the use of her power.”—She burst into tears, and left the room. Mr. Clement is quite his advocate.—I am interrupted.

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR SISTER,

SEND Sophia down instantly—Eliza is lost—I never suffered so much as within the last two hours. Collins is distracted, for she loved her like a mother. That wicked young man—what can he expect? The Doctor is very angry; but he should have foreseen and prevented it.—Yesterday evening we were all invited to the Parsonage-house: Henry Freeman being this morning to set off for Cambridge, we drank tea, and spent the evening there.—About eleven o'clock our carriage came, for it had rained all the evening; and, as Eliza stepped in, she turned about to Henry, who handed her from the drawing-room out, and said, "Well, remember."—I took no notice of it, because I thought it only the natural consequence of their intimacy, and that she was reminding him of some boyish promise to write to her, or some such thing.—This morning Henrietta came down to breakfast alone, her frock only slipped on her arms, and not pinned.—She went up to Collins, who had just stepped into the room before her, and said, "Pray, Mrs. Collins, be so good as to pin my frock; my sister Eliza got up so soon that I had nobody to help me."—"Where is Eliza, my love?" says Collins; and, without waiting for an answer, ran out of the room;—we all followed, one by one—and having spent an hour in a fruitless search all over the house, garden, and meadow—Collins ran to the Parsonage-house, to see if Henry was gone—immediately guessing at the unfortunate truth.—Doctor Freeman raved—and the other boys laughed.—Miss Freeman shed some tears of modesty and sweetness, and then said, "If my brother has injured the confidence of Eliza, half my fortune shall be hers, and I will never see his face."—Collins came back, invoking blessings on the sweet girl; and, as she returned, met a gardener in the lane, who had seen Eliza and Henry go off together in a single-horse-chaise, about four o'clock in the morning. We sent to the only house in the village where it could have been obtained; and find, that Henry bespoke it yesterday evening about eight o'clock.—I recollect we missed him and Eliza about that time; so that probably it was then they agreed upon her flight. We have sent Philip in pursuit of them; if they be gone on to Cambridge, we shall hear something of them, though perhaps not what we shall like to hear;—but, if they should have taken any other road, heaven knows what may be the consequence! I do not think him a young man of principle; but, indeed, in his situation, how few youths could shew their principle! Unfortunate girl! Charles's misfortunes had been enough for the family; lost to his relations; and probably all his hopes of future success in life blasted—a self-exiled wanderer, out of the knowledge of any who could serve him;—yet it is *possible* that he may recover himself:—but poor Eliza! excluded by the severe dispensations of an unforgiving world from the advantages of future prudence! an hour—a moment's folly to her must probably be fatal!—We have just had intelligence that the wretched fugitive is gone towards London.—Gracious heaven! what will become of her!—to search in such a place for an unknown individual, is almost ridiculous, and must be fruitless.—What shall we do?—Doctor Freeman has sent his coachman and footman different roads—sure we shall hear something to-day.—Good heaven! here is a

discovery!—Well, it is better than we expected—if it is true.—She has scarcely taken a second change of any thing in the world. Collins went up to search her drawers; and in the uppermost found the inclosed letter to me.

I am my dear sister's affectionate

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R L I.
TO MRS. BELLAS.

MADAM,

I SHOULD never forgive myself, if I quitted your house without leaving behind me the warmest and most grateful acknowledgments of your's and Mr. Bellas's goodness to me and my sisters. I hope they will not suffer in your opinion by the step I am now about to take;—but, as Mr. Freeman was obliged to go to Cambridge, and as my happiness depended on his not having it in his power to forget me, I have consented to go to Scotland with him directly, that he may be mine beyond the power of fate. I hope the doctor will forgive him when we return. Mean time, I remain

Your most grateful

ELIZA.

L E T T E R LII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

WELL, Charlotte, we are to have a wedding at last.—Sophia has blush'd consent; Mr. Clement has invited the company; and we are to have a jolly day at Shuter's-hill, where the bride and bridegroom spend a few days, and then proceed to Frogly.

I never saw a man so delighted as poor Powell seems to be—it is wonderful to me how you could dislike him.—Mercy on me! I have just received your letter:—poor little madcap!—If young Freeman should deceive her, I think he must be the greatest villain existing;—but I hope in heaven he will not:—if he marries her, I shall only lament the precipitancy of the step; and trust in the old man's benevolence, and the kindness of that good girl the sister, to put them in some way to make the best of it.—Let me hear every article of intelligence you obtain. I wish they may return at least by the time Sophia goes home; or I think it will break her heart. I do not see why I should make her unhappy about it now; she cannot possibly mend the matter; and at such a time to make her mind uneasy, would be acting the part of the bird of night, rather than that of a participating friend. However, if you insist upon it, I will tell her; but I will wait to hear from you again. I am going out, as soon as the coach comes, to buy a few presents for Sophia: Mr. Clement desired me to provide him with a wedding-sacque for her. Men think women are as easily dressed with a gown, as they are with a suit of clothes.—I shall add a suit of Bath Brussels; which, with a cap which I shall bespeak at Wilkinson's, will furnish her for her wedding-visits, without any expence of her own little fund—if you commission me to add a pair of pearl ear-rings, I will do that on Friday or Saturday. This day sevensnight is fixed for the wedding—heaven grant it be a happy one!—it is the first match I ever had a hand in; if it should turn out ill, I never should forgive myself.

Bless my dear little Charles in my name; and believe me ever my dear Charlotte's affectionate

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L I I I .

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

IT would be almost impious to arraign the goodness of that heart which proves, by its benevolence, its divine extraction;—but, my dear Marianne, you are still mortal, and liable to a mortal's imperfections:—you see but the outside. Powell has a speciousness of external deportment, which has caught your approbation; whilst, if I am not much misinformed, he has a heart void of every one of those feelings which overflow in such abundance in yours:—he has suffered a mother, who was never deficient in her duty to him, to know all the miseries of want; whilst he was expending, in the superfluous trifles which his vanity suggested, more than would have procured her an easy passage to the grave—he has seduced more than one innocent creature in the village from their duty and their peace; and, when his licentious intimacy has produced the natural effects, he has left the guiltless infants and their unhappy mothers to feel the punishment of his crimes. One of them he married to a servant of his, and took into his house; and, when the inhuman wretch has been upbraiding the victim with her former shame, the unfeeling master has made it a cause of triumph, and an argument to forward his success with the young woman who then lived with him as a kind of housekeeper; from her this intelligence came—she soon quitted his service, and now lives with a gentleman of some property about three quarters of a mile from hence.—If they are not married—shew this to Sophia; if they are—burn, and endeavour to forget it. You have acted a friendly part towards her; her situation, considered in every point of view, makes her marriage with an honest man a most desirable circumstance; but I am afraid it is not possible for a man, who has been an unfeeling and undutiful son, to be a good husband. There are, in the occurrences of a married life, so many trials of a man's humanity, that he, whose want of sensibility might pass unnoticed had he continued single, must often appear a very monster when considered as a husband.—Should such a woman as we know Sophia to be, unfortunately fall to the lot of such a man as I have had Powell described to me, inevitable misery must be the consequence. I shall be impatient till I hear from you again.—May that Power, whose charge the weak and unprotected are, take the poor girl to its peculiar care!—No news of Eliza.

Ever thy

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R L I V .

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I DO not know that I ever was so thoroughly shocked as at reading your character of the man to whom I had but an hour before seen Sophia give her hand. From the performance of the ceremony we returned to our house, where Mr. and Mrs. Belmour, and Mr. and Mrs. Baker, waited to join our party, and proceed to Shuter's-hill. The miss Dean, whose name I believe I had mentioned to you, acted as bride-maid, and Mr. James Clement as bride-man—my Mr. Clement gave her away; and I went because she desired it. Mr. Clement, miss Dean, Sophia, and I, went in the coach; and Mr. J. Clement and the bridegroom followed in the chariot; but, as we returned, Mr. Clement and I took their vehicle, and the four young people came home together.—By the time we had drank a dish of chocolate round, and the horses had been fed, to please Mr. Clement, your letter was brought to me. I opened it with some apprehension, on account of Eliza. But, when I saw the real contents, I thought I should have fainted—my looks told so much, that I was obliged to shew Mr. Clement the cause. He was rather angry, than hurt; and, observing that the whole accusation rested upon the evidence of a servant, he said he wondered that you, who had so much caution in matters of less consequence, should be so easily convinced in one of so much importance; and that your Collins, or our Selby, would say as much of any of us, the moment they were out of our houses. I own, I was very willing to take his side of the argument; and why, my dear Charlotte, should we not suppose he may be in the right? at least, upon your own injunction to burn the letter, and forget the circumstance, I was justified in hoping the best—for caution was then too late.—About two o'clock we set out, a party of ten, to Shuter's-hill, where we dined, drank tea, played at cards, and supped; and about eleven o'clock, the moon in its full glory, and four servants well-armed to protect us, we took leave of the new-married pair, without any other ceremony than we should have observed towards each other. Thus, under the conduct of Mr. Clement, we passed a day which, in general, wears a face of awkwardness and restraint, with the utmost ease, cheerfulness, and good order. We all got safe to our several destinations; and dine together to-day at Mr. Belmour's, in Dover-Street. I cannot however dismiss the apprehensions with which your letter has filled me. Do you know, that I think you owe it to Mr. Powell to search the matter to the bottom? He seems much devoted to the sex, I confess; but I cannot think him capable of harbouring a thought injurious to an individual of it, much less of the horrid unmanly acts of which he is accused; his whole behaviour yesterday, not only to Sophia, whom he seems to venerate, but to the company at large, gave the lie to his accuser. Is she not some artful woman, who may have formed some designs which his marriage with Sophia must interfere with? At all events, the die is cast; and consideration, which is invaluable when antecedent to an act, by being out of season is become useless, and almost impertinent.

I made Sophia, at parting, promise to write to me. She begged to be excused; and modestly said, that I should trade upon very unequal terms if I were to give her my letters for her's; and yet that she should perhaps be unreasonable enough to expect it. I did not

chuse to let her off, however, but insisted upon her promise; and, speaking aloud before her husband, told her, that, as I had made myself accountable to her for happiness in pleading his cause, I should expect as an act of gratitude to have that happiness avowed, or as an act of justice to be called upon for any thing in my power to promote it whenever there was a deficiency—as the bail was always responsible, when the principal failed.” He very cheerfully acquiesced; and said, “that he should endeavour to exculpate his surety, by performing covenants to the utmost of his power, though his obligation to Mrs. Clement would be one of the last things he should forget.” Those words chilled me, when I thought of your letter; for goodness sake, Charlotte, send for that woman, and hear what she has to say!—and yet, what service can it do us now!—I need not beg that you will send me word the moment Eliza returns. I long to know what reception she will meet with at the Vicarage. My little ones greet their brother Charles, to whom my blessings and his father’s.—Our love to Mr. Bellas; and believe me my dear sister’s

Ever affectionate

MARIANNE.

LETTER LV.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

POOR Sophia! the die indeed is cast—may her virtues make such an impression, as to produce their likeness! Kind Providence, whose dispensations to thy creatures are full of mercy, thanks for the alleviating circumstances of poor Eliza's safety!—Yesterday evening we were sitting at tea, and seeing a carriage drive up the yard, I put out my head, and saw Eliza.—I ran to the door, where, throwing herself at my feet, she cried, “Indeed, indeed, madam, as well as I love Mr. Freeman, I would not have gone without seeing you, had I known that you loved me so well—but every night, since I have been gone, I have dreamt of you, and seen you in such distress as to make me miserable;—can you, my dear madam, can you forgive me?”—I took her up, and begged her to satisfy my impatient enquiries, and relieve me from that distress her fancy pictured. Henry (who was at this time discharging the chaise) came up to the hall-door, where we still stood, with all the confidence of conscious virtue; and seeing me holding Eliza's hand with a countenance of kindness—he said, “I see, madam, your heart is what I thought it, open to all the feelings that do honour to humanity.” My looks expressed something; to which he replied, “She is my wife, and now I am resigned to my father's pleasure in every thing, since what God has joined together he will not put asunder.”—By this time the news of their arrival reached the Vicarage; and Miss Freeman, with her brother Thomas, came running down.—She threw her arms about Eliza, and cried, “Welcome, welcome, my dear Eliza—may I add my sister?”—Henry stood forward, and answered; for her confusion and her tenderness overwhelmed her. He gave a very minute account of their expedition, and all the attendant circumstances—and then asked, “whether he might venture to approach his father?”—Miss Freeman behaved like an angel—told them, “that, as soon as she was of age, half her fortune should be at their service; and that, if her father should have the same feeling towards Eliza that she had, and should take her home, as she hoped he would, it would be the greatest blessing of her life to comfort and console her, whilst Henry went to Cambridge, to qualify himself for the better support of her and himself.”—Eliza was all gratitude, and we all rapture; when your confirmation of Sophia's wedding came, and wrung the heart of your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R LVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

I Participate most sincerely my dear sister's enjoyment of Eliza's happy return;—there is something singular in a circumstance which I have just discovered.—I have a letter from Sophia, who is got to her house, as you know no doubt, and has seen her sister Freeman: they have been comparing notes, I find; and Eliza was married at Edinburgh on the very same day and hour that Sophia was married in London.—She tells me, that Doctor Freeman has behaved to Eliza with a degree of tenderness, that nothing but his daughter's affection for her can exceed.—What an unexpected occurrence!—Few girls left in their situations have ever, perhaps, been so fortunate—let us hope it will not end here; but that poor Sophia may have had her full portion of suffering!—She says little respecting herself.—Mr. Powell, she fears, has injured his business by the time he threw away in London—but that he is too delicate to attribute it to that cause; and rather accounts for the people of the village deserting him in favour of his contemporary, to some scandalous stories that have been propagated, in order, as he supposes, to injure him with her; however, hopes that a little time will get the better of it, and restore his business to its wonted state of credit.—I cannot say I like it much.—Sophia don't seem alarmed, or rather don't seem to know that she is.—Mr. Clement has a large quantity of rhubarb consigned to him from Turkey; he talks of sending Powell a parcel of it as a present; but, after this hint of Sophia's, there's no knowing how he may receive it.—Mr. Osborn writes me word, that he has seen Amelia; and that, by the time his negotiation is finished, she will have compiled her history—if so, I shall have it in time to carry to Frogly; 'twill amuse us all, as the evenings grow long.—My hairdresser is come.—My love to all who love me; and do you be assured of the unalterable affection of thy

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LVII.

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAR MARIANNE,

WE all dined yesterday at the Vicarage—the invitation was, by the Doctor’s desire, from Mr. and Mrs. *Henry* Freeman. Eliza was placed at the head of the table; the Doctor next her on one hand, and I at the other, Henry occupying the married man’s place at the lower end of the table.—George and Henrietta dined at a side-table by themselves, and seemed to partake largely of the general joy;—next to the Doctor sat Sophia, and on my left hand Mr. Powell.—I own myself a convert; if he be a villain, he is the best counterfeit of an amiable character I ever saw; he behaved extremely well to Sophia; but I thought she did not seem so happy as I could have wished.—I am afraid her head is not at peace on a certain subject. I never saw a woman conduct herself better than Eliza—nor could I have supposed that it was possible for sixteen to assume such a dignified propriety.—It is not easy to decide whether the Doctor or Henry love her most; nor could a father, whose son had brought a hundred thousand pounds into his family, shew more respect to his daughter-in-law—in short, they are all happy in each other, and seem to have but one object of contention, and that is, who shall oblige most. The Doctor told us, after dinner, that his little house-keeper, pointing to Eliza, had given him the trouble of forming a new plan for the disposal of Henry—for that he should be ashamed to send a married man to school—that he was therefore somewhat at a loss, and should be glad of our advice.—Mr. Bellas told him, that he should think it very eligible for Mr. Freeman to speak his own sentiments—that, if he liked a country gentleman’s life, he had a farm which he should rent on his own terms, or purchase at a fair appraisement: and that, if he did the latter, all the live-stock should be his gift to Eliza, by way of dower.—The Doctor smiled at the word purchase, and said, “Why Mr. Bellas—I have been a good subject, and Henry seems inclined to follow my example. I married at twenty myself, and have seen myself the father of seven sons, all of whom, except the eldest, you see—and nine daughters, eight of whom are with their excellent mother.—Fanny was all the hopes I had of comfort in my old age; but now I have got another chance for it in Eliza.”—She blushed, and shed a tear of satisfaction; which he enjoyed, and then went on—“the consequence of so large a family is obvious—I had but a small patrimony of my own, and that must descend to Arthur my eldest son. Mrs. Freeman had not a shilling when I married her; but, in the course of our living together, she had ten thousand pounds left her, with remainder to Fanny.—I have never touched a shilling of it; though she is so good a girl, that I, or any of her brothers, would, I am sure, be welcome to share it.” Here her answer was necessary.—“Indeed, Sir, says she, I should be very undeserving of your good opinion, if I lost so happy an opportunity of approving it—suffer me now to declare thus publickly, as I have done to my brother and sister alone, that half my fortune will give me more happiness in settling them advantageously, than the whole could, laid out for myself—and, if they approve of Mr. Bellas’s proposal, we will have the estate valued; and, the moment I am of age, if five thousand pounds will pay the purchase, it is theirs.”—Every tongue was for a moment mute, in token of applause; and all at once

broke out in praises of her benevolence of heart: only Henry and Eliza added a refusal. Mr. Bellas, however, reminding the Doctor, that seven hundred towards the purchase was ready in Eliza's right—it was agreed, that the appraiser, who sold the furniture, &c. for the girls, should be sent for immediately; that the young people should stay with the Doctor till the house was fitted up and furnished; and that Henrietta should divide her time amongst her sisters, Miss Freeman, and me, till she should be settled in her own house.—The Doctor observed, that matches made by parents for infants seldom succeeded; but that George was a pretty boy, and had five hundred pounds a-year settled upon him by his Godfather the late Lord ——. Henrietta blushed, and looked her acquiescence; and George took the first opportunity of our attention being withdrawn, to seal his approbation with a kiss.—We spent the evening very happily—only Sophia's brow was now and then overspread with a gloom that chilled my blood.—I believe nobody else observed it.—Powell was as agreeable as ever I saw a man of so moderate an understanding; and we all promised to dine with them next Tuesday—the Saturday following the whole party spend with us.—Thomas Freeman goes to Cambridge, instead of Henry.—I suppose, when Mrs. Belmour goes to Bath, you will devote a week to your

CHARLOTTE

L E T T E R LVIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

DO you know, Charlotte, that I am quite miserable at the apprehension you entertain of poor Sophia's unhappiness; yet, if she disliked the man, she certainly would not have married him.—I wish I had never interposed—I am afraid I was actuated by motives I did not perceive, to urge the poor girl to marry, that she might no longer be an argument of anxiety to you.—Yet certainly, as you yourself say, her marriage was, on her own account, a most desirable circumstance.—I don't know what to make of her letters—she seems to have an inclination to tell me something, and checks herself, perhaps upon the principle of duty. I am vexed too at your insinuation about my coming to Frogly when Mrs. Belmour goes to Bath; it is the only circumstance in which I can accuse you of a narrowness of mind: my esteeming a friend is no argument that I do not love a sister—banish such conclusions—rely upon it, my heart has room enough for all its inhabitants—nature has an inexhaustible supply of affection to bestow, of which a part is dispensed on every acquisition we make, whether of husband, children, or friends—else how comes it that feelings, which are all natural, are every day exerted to those different relatives, and in a breast of generous extent no clashing ever felt? Did I love you less after I married Mr. Clement? did I love you less when bounteous nature blessed me with my children?—If not—why should my indulging the feelings of a sister depend upon the accidental occurrences which happen to a friend? Excuse me, Charlotte; I am not apt to be serious—upon trifling subjects I never am;—but you have roused my sensibility more in the last line of your letter, than Mrs. Belmour, though I confess I love her, could have done in a volume. However, though she is gone to Bath, I cannot come to Frogly.—Charlotte is not well; and Mr. Forbes thinks she is breeding the small-pox; if so, I know not when I shall be able to leave town: I dread the thoughts of poor Frank's catching it now he is about his teeth. I think, if there were no other subjects of anxiety but our children, this world would be far enough removed from a state of happiness to make a future one necessary; at least I am sure it would be to thy

MARIANNE.

LETTER LIX.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY dear Charlotte must believe me, when I declare that my last letter was dictated in a moment of distress;—my dear little girl was very ill; her fine eyes had lost their brightness, and her cheeks their bloom; my heart was breaking with apprehension for my little darling, whose safety is of moment to my existence;—so that, if my unusual gravity should offend or hurt you, consider the cause, and pity the effects.—Heaven be praised! my girl is quite recovered; and my little cherub grown as strong almost as Charles; so that my mind is now tuned to happiness again. Mr. Clement, who loves them you know as well as I do when they are well, feels, if possible, more when they are in danger; two nights last week he was so miserable about Charlotte, that he even neglected his letters; and a very unlucky mistake has happened in consequence; however, I hope it will easily be rectified; though it is amazing how much nicety and exactness the business and correspondence of a merchant requires: it is unfortunate that Mr. Osborne, who alone can corroborate Mr. Clement in rectifying the error, is still absent; we expect him in a few days, when I hope to hear how poor Amelia relishes her recluse situation. Mr. and Mrs. Baker leave us to-morrow, for a month; and spend the remainder of the winter with us, after their Devonshire visits are paid; they are really a most amiable couple, and certainly formed for each other. How capricious it was in Fortune, to send the sweet woman such a pilgrimage in her way to paradise!—Her unhappy friend, of whose marriage I have told you, is released from her sorrows. The villain, who had deserted her in those distresses which he alone brought upon her, is stung with remorse almost to madness;—she just lived to hear of Mrs. Baker's intention towards her; and on her death-bed charged the black slave, who attended her, to convey her little girl over to England, to be educated under Mrs. Baker. She accepts the charge with great pleasure, and means to settle upon the child the sum she would have sunk for the mother's annuity; and, should she not have any children herself, will probably make her a great fortune. Mr. Clement has contracted a greater intimacy with Mr. Baker than any man he knows, except Frank and his brother James.—Write soon, to convince me you are not angry with

Your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I WONDER I have not heard from you.—I had adjusted all my matters, with intention to have set out as this day for Frogly—but I suppose I am not to be so happy. Something has occurred, to discompose Mr. Clement so much, that I cannot think it right to leave him; he would not desire me to give it up, because he knew how much I wished to see you; but I know he will be the better pleased with my stay, for that reason. Charlotte has had a little return of her feverish complaint: I have sent for Dr. B——; he thinks she has worms, and is now treating her accordingly.—Charles's parole is lengthened—you are like to keep him now till spring, unless he grows troublesome; if so, I will send Selby for him whenever you please.—I wish Mr. Osborne was come home. I am afraid the stagnation which the mistake I hinted at has occasioned will embarrass Mr. Clement greatly; and, in aid of that misfortune, a house at Boulogne, in which we are deeply concerned, has stopped payment. You know trifles do not affect him; but he is really so depressed at present, that I am apprehensive for his health, as well as his credit. May that Power, who knows his worth, preserve both to him! and him to his children and me!—I am greatly shocked at looking back to the many superfluous guineas which in the course of seven years of uninterrupted prosperity we have lavished away. Yet Mr. Clement is not extravagant in any of his propensities; nor has indulged himself in any expence that did not seem greatly within his income; but, when I find of how much consequence a few thousands would now be, and then carry on a train of reasoning from thousands to hundreds, from hundreds to twentys, and from twentys to pounds, and so down to the minutest article of what we call trifling expences, I am really culpable in my own opinion. I do not know whether the Boulogne business has got abroad; but there have been more calls for money since Monday last than in any four days since we have been married; and, should it continue four days more, it would be very inconvenient.—About the seventh of last month, we ventured a ship richly freighted to Ireland, without insurance; and, should any accident happen there, as misfortunes are apt to accumulate, Mr. Clement must lose two thousand pounds at one stroke; the advice of her safe arrival is hourly expected: I hope this day's post will put an end to suspense upon that subject. One of Mr. Clement's favourite horses has lost an eye, and almost killed Francis, who happened to be riding him out, when the accidental clashing of two carriages turned him against the ballustrade of a house near Chelsea, and one of the spikes ran into his eye;—the poor creature was very ill for several days; he is now quite recovered, and Mr. Clement thinks of sending the set to Tattersal's, to be sold to the best bidder; for every trifling sum is now of consequence; and the sale of horses is a double advantage, both on account of what it brings, and what it saves. Indeed the keeping of horses is the only subject on which we ever disagreed; but he loved the idea; and he had an undoubted right to indulge himself.—Selby is another useless expence; and I intend to take the first opportunity of getting rid of her: but the artful creature has wound herself about my convenience, by never chusing to take any wages—my cloaths have always supplied her,

except in very trifles; and in them she has been so great an oeconomist, that I believe we do not owe her less than fifty pounds; at present it would not be prudent to part with such a sum; and my pride and my understanding forbid me to discharge her till we can pay her. I never will owe another servant above a year's wages at a time; for, notwithstanding it was her own choice, I think she has grown saucy and idle in proportion as her money accumulated,—in fact, at present she is a mere boarder in the family. I asked her the other day to wash some frocks, and make up a few caps for Charlotte, whilst the nurse was entirely devoted to Frank, who was not well; and told her, by way of apology, that the nursery-maid did not please me in her getting-up linen. She told me, that “she was not miss Clement's maid; and that, if Sally could not wash, there were nursery-maids enough to be had that could.” I was stunned at her impudence; and told her, that she should never refuse me twice.—I confess, that, had I not heard Mr. Clement complain of a scarcity of cash, I should have discharged her instantly. How much must people, whose circumstances are always streightned, be in the power of their servants! no wonder there are so many bad ones. Adieu! Write soon, and comfort

Your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X I .

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

MY DEAREST SISTER,

THE complexion of your last letter has pierced me to the heart;—for heaven's sake, discharge that ungrateful wretch instantly. Enclosed is a draught for seventy pounds, which Mr. Bellas took in part of a year's rent, to oblige farmer Colman: he will consider it as a favour if you will get it accepted; and you will make me happy if you will pay and get rid of that impertinent woman;—whenever matters take their accustomed turn with my brother, I will call upon you for the payment;—mean time, if you would have me think you love me, never mention the matter. Charles is in charming spirits, has had the small-pox, and is as handsome as ever;—let this, my dear Marianne, be an omen of returning happiness!—Mr. Bellas would not suffer me to alarm your sensibility, by mentioning his illness, till it was over.—I knew he meant you kindly, and could not disobey him: but I could not reconcile it to myself to omit so material a piece of intelligence, if I wrote at all; therefore I thought I should do best to let the pen alone till I could use it to give you pleasure. May heaven avert the ills you dread! and preserve your husband in health, happiness, and prosperity! At all events, let Charles be mine: if I should have a son, he shall share with him in every feeling of my heart; if not, Mr. Bellas will take care to secure to him the possession of Frogly-farm. My state of health is such as to make the latter most probable.—However, for the present I have your promise, and shall avail myself of it—till I think him troublesome, you know I am to keep him. Mr. Bellas desires me to say, that, if Mr. Clement will accept of any assistance in his power, he will prove himself most his friend, by calling upon him. He would write himself, but does not know how far you would chuse my brother should be acquainted with our knowledge of it; we leave it all to your management. Remember, my dear sister, that these are the moments when alone true friendship can prove its superiority over its shadow—worldly civility.—Allow that happiness to your

F. and C. BELLAS.

L E T T E R L X I I .

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

TEN thousand thanks to my dear brother and sister, for the opportunity they have given me of loving them still better, if it be possible, than I did before! Mr. Clement desires me to say every thing he feels; but that is impossible—hearts like his are not easily translated into language, even by the owners; let him try, if he chuses; for my part, I don't love to set about any thing convinced beforehand that I must fail in the execution of it. Our affairs, thank Heaven, are happily re-established on their former basis. The Irish mail brought us returns for the ship I mentioned, and Mr. Osborne is come back from Germany, with a full satisfaction for the bills which he carried over.—He has brought Amelia's history—which (as soon as I have read it) I will convey to you; mean time you must finish whatever you are about, and be ready for a whole week's employment, which I am sure you will enjoy, though you did not know Amelia sufficiently to relish it as I do.—It is wonderful that any father should be so lost to the natural feelings of a parent, as to force a child to be miserable, without the possibility of reaping any advantage himself.—Nature points out to us, the moment a child is born, the duty of nurturing and protecting it; as it grows up, of educating and informing it;—and I should imagine, that, when those duties were over, that of placing it in the situation where happiness was most probable would naturally succeed; for love is, or should be, uniform in all our exertions towards them—whether in the nursery, the study, or the world at large.—Amelia's father, however, as you will find, proceeded upon a different principle: I think her mode of expressing herself will please you greatly—free from the levity which you dislike, or the stiffness which must tire.—Poor girl! it is a melancholy circumstance, that she should be cut off from all the joys of society, and shut up in a cloistered inutility, because a father was a tyrant, and a husband a brute!—Charlotte is better. Accept our thanks for your intentions towards Charles. I sincerely hope, however, that Providence will supersede his claim, by blessing you with a boy of your own.—If I was not sure of your belief, I would not say so much; but you know your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LXIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

CHARLOTTE, I have changed my mind—you shall have Amelia's history, letter by letter;—if you don't like the first, you shall have no more—so read the inclosed, and give me your opinion.—All here are well—and send their love with mine.

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R LXIV.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR MADAM,

SINCE I have been honoured with your last commands, which were final, with respect to the task you have enjoined me, I have several times set about the execution of them.—I was in hopes to have made a much smaller compass inclose my insignificant story; but, I know not how, I have been led on from one little circumstance to another, till I am afraid I have set you a task more painful than that you assigned to me.—I will not take up any more of your time in apologies, than just what serves to assure you, that, if I have dwelt upon little circumstances of extenuation longer than may seem necessary, it proceeded not from an egotism natural to me, but that ardent desire which I feel, even at this distance, to stand as well as possible in the opinion of a person whose approbation is of more value to me than the rest of the world.—Had you treated me with that conscious superiority which unblemished virtue entitled you to, and which will always appear where the virtues of generosity and social sympathy are not as powerful as that of chastity; I should, perhaps, have revered you for the possession of the latter, but the want of the former would have made reverence alone all the tribute I should pay.—But in the course of the few, the very few, hours I was under your roof, I discovered, in your conduct and conversation, an heart so enlarged, an head so accomplished, so ample a capacity for judging, and so benevolent a disposition to forgive—even those faults, of which happy reflection pronounced you clear—that my esteem, my affection, my duty, pointed you out as the most deserving object of all their attention.—Upon this principle it is, that I have laid before you not only the actions of my life, but, so far as I could discover, every secret spring that moved them.—If the recital affords entertainment to you, or instruction to one young mind which feels as I did, the task will be amply rewarded to your most grateful

AMELIA.

L E T T E R L X V .

MRS. BELLAS TO MRS. CLEMENT.

I HAVE two letters from my dear Marianne—the first brings me the happiest tidings I could hear at present—and the latter has filled me with more than my natural share of curiosity. I applaud the resolution of Amelia; and sincerely hope, that self-love, that universal deceiver, will not thwart her in a design so laudable.—It is very certain that many actions, which, to a superficial observer, may appear in the extreme of good or bad, were the motives honestly laid before the same person, might so far alter their nature, as to deserve a very different degree of approbation or censure—nay, sometimes, take the opposite complexion;—but then the motives must be laid open by the possessor;—and it seldom happens that a mind capable of doing justice to those minute particles of human action in description—or (to use your own phrase, which is better) to translate the feelings—hath ingenuousness enough to make that sacrifice to society.—In every thing self predominates—and very often patriotism, piety, and even well-acted passion (if you could make a window in the human breast) would be translated—self, self, self.—She seems, however, possessed of so much humility, and so well reconciled to her situation, excluding that commerce with the world which often deters writers from saying all, for fear of cold civility and averted looks—that every degree of impartiality may be expected from her.—But why send me her letters one by one?—Remember you desired not to see them so yourself. I need not use any further argument to extort the whole packet from you at once—do as you would be done by.—Charles is to throw off his petticoats on Sunday.—You cannot conceive how manly and handsome he looks in his masculine habit.—We meditate an excursion into Yorkshire; and we thought his trowsers would be the properest equipment for travelling. I fancy the acres will be all his own;—and 'tis but right that he should have his fancy consulted in the allotment of them.—Mr. Bellas is dividing one large farm into four, to atone, as far as one individual can, for the inhuman passion, now so prevalent, of putting six into one, to the discouragement of industry, and the starving of five honest men and their families.—Dinner waits. Send me the history in your next, and you will oblige your

CHARLOTTE.

L E T T E R LXVI.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

HOW I love my dear Charlotte for her impatience!—It is so like myself, that, upon her own principle, she will readily believe me.—The true reason that I mean to send you but one letter at a time is this—I have reflected that your vile cross-post sometimes plays us tricks; and I should never forgive myself, if I lost the packet, or even a part of it.—I mean therefore to copy the letters, and send you a compleat history for your own, as my little Charlotte says.—Selby is gone:—we had a disagreeable parting; but I know you will be pleased to hear it is over.—I believe I must resolve not to say a word to you, but enclose the letters as I copy them, for I never can leave off when once I begin.—Goodbye!—Till the history is compleat, expect no more news from your

MARIANNE.

L E T T E R L X V I I .

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT.

DEAR MADAM,

IN order to introduce some early anecdotes of myself, it is necessary that I go back to the remotest period of which I have any knowledge, either from my own memory, or the relation of my mother, whose veracity was ever unquestionable;—as to her unhappy choice of a husband was owing my misfortune of not being allowed to chuse at all.—My mother was about twelve years old when my uncle Charles was born, who, being the first son, though the seventh child, was, from the moment of his birth, the principal object of his father's attention. His mother, however, who was by all accounts a very amiable woman, but not possessed of any great understanding, was perhaps blameably partial to all her daughters, but particularly to the eldest, who was my mother.—This difference in sentiment produced many misunderstandings between the parents, who, from the birth of my uncle James (a year after his brother), never lived in the same apartment. My mother and three of her sisters were sent to a boarding-school in Yorkshire, to save expence—and the two younger girls with their brothers still remained in the nursery—till the small-pox made a fatal visit to the family, and carried off both the girls—my uncle James hardly escaping the same fate. My grandmother was inconsolable; and, to reconcile her in some degree, her husband, who had not lost the feelings of humanity, though he had quarrelled with her, sent for my mother from school.—She was then about sixteen—and had been four years at that seminary of folly, specious idleness, and viciating romance.—She was taught to read, but not to think—to dance, to sing, to do every thing but what was useful.—My father, who was, when she was sent there, drawing-master to the school, had contrived to render himself agreeable to her—and in the course of her stay, by the death of a distant relation, became possessed of a considerable estate in the same county, which I suppose did not injure him in her heart, particularly as, from her father's partiality, she had little to expect in her favour.—Just at the period when she was sent for, my father had brought matters to such a crisis, that she had consented to marry him privately.—However, she had too much filial piety to refuse to obey the summons—she came, and found her mother very ill, and in a few days after followed her to the grave.—She was then in a situation truly pitiable;—having lost her mother, neglected by her father, and her head brim-full of the recent solicitations of a lover, whose suit her heart had granted, though her understanding pointed out many objections. Just as she was about to return to school, her father called her one day into his study—and, having prepared her for the proposal with more tenderness than she had reason to expect, told her, that a gentleman of about fifty (three years older than himself) had made overtures respecting a marriage with her; and, as a friend, advised her to accept it; for that he was willing to make her a very good jointure; which, as he was not in circumstances to give her a shilling, was not likely to be met with every day. She remonstrated upon the inequality of fifty and sixteen: but he was very laconic upon the subject; and told her, that she might either marry his friend, or prepare for her journey as soon as she pleased; and that Rachael, her next sister, must come home and keep his house. Mortified at this

unkind distinction, and shocked at the horror of his proposed match, she returned to Yorkshire; resolved to conquer all her former scruples, and marry my father. It is painful to be obliged to lay open the errors of those one is bound to honour, but; as mine are in some measure consequent upon theirs, it is unavoidable.

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXVIII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

AS soon as my mother returned to school, my father made her a visit of condolence.—Having once taught there, he had always access as a general visitor; but now, upon hearing my mother's account of her reception at home, and her father's proposal of a match to her; Mr. Thompson, who either loved her extravagantly, or fancied he did, avowed himself her lover, and declared his intention to her governess; who thinking him a very good match for her, and considering her as an orphan from the recent circumstances that had happened, encouraged his addresses, but insisted upon my mother's writing for a formal consent, previous to her actually being married.—To this they both consented, but from the native sense of filial duty (which I well know requires more acts of cruelty than one to destroy it); but—her lover (for, on this occasion, I would fain forget he was my father), finding her so cheap in a parent's estimation, began to think her love might be had upon easier terms than matrimony:—he therefore, with well-acted reluctance, consented to her postponing the day of marriage till her father's answer should arrive; hoping, in the mean time, to find a cause to make it unnecessary.—My mother wrote to her father by her sister Rachael, in the most submissive and filial style her understanding and her feelings could suggest—told him, that, as he had expressed a wish to see her married, and had been kind enough not to constrain her to marry a man she could not love, she was now encouraged to ask his permission, to marry a gentleman more suitable to her years, who had it in his power and inclination to make a provision for her perhaps fully equal to the other; that she however could not reconcile it to herself, to accept of him, or any other person, without his approbation; and that the gentleman was ready, whenever he could obtain leave, to wait upon him, to make known his own sentiments.—Her father was much affected by her letter, and, being a man of quick and transitory feelings, became as fond of her as he had been neglectful:—he sent down immediately an invitation to the lover; and desired his daughter to prepare for her return to town in the course of a month at farthest; expressing, at the same time, the kindest wishes for her future happiness; and confessing that his behaviour towards her, for the last three or four years, had not merited such dutiful returns on her part.—Her heart overflowed with those feelings which it must ever be in vain to describe;—those minds, whose peculiar happiness it is to possess them, will conceive from the situation what they were;—and those, who possess the negative happiness to be without them, would not understand the description, though given by a Shakespeare or a Sterne.—As soon as the letter arrived, she communicated the contents to her lover, who, disappointed as he was of gaining the consent which he expected her despair would dictate on her father's refusal, was not without a resource in his own idea;—besides his natural propensity to acts of cruelty, in which he has so signalized himself since that time, he had then another fancy, or (as he would call it) an attachment, to the daughter of an attorney of some eminence, whom he had met with at York races;—between his engagements to my mother, and his latent passion for this lady, he was exceedingly embarrassed, and

proposed to settle both by his expedition to London.—He told my mother, that he would immediately prepare for his journey; but that in his way he would spend a day or two at his lawyer's, in order that he might carry the writings with him, ready for signing;—and then, as if it was a new thought, asked my mother to give him leave to conduct her in his carriage, either with one of her sisters, or any other companion she might chuse.—She had not an idea, but of guileless innocence herself; nor once suspected him. The governess, who knew the world, objected;—but he soon got the better of her scruples; and, on the Sunday morning following, the party, consisting of my father, mother, and a sister of the governess, who came to visit a son she had an apprentice to a linen-draper in London, set out from Yorkshire; and, one of the horses having met with an accident, were obliged to spend the evening and night at a very indifferent house about thirty miles onward of their journey.—Accommodations being scarce, the ladies were obliged to accept of one bed; but my mother, who happened to be very ill, and did not sleep, soon heard a foot steal softly towards the bed; and, upon stirring her companion, and speaking very loud, perceived the person, who she conceived to be a man, turn about and go out of the room.—As soon as the door was shut, she got up and rang the bell; and the people of the house, alarmed at a noise they were not much accustomed to, carried the idea to the utmost; and, as they rose ran to different parts of the house, crying “Fire!” My mother, little imagining her bell to be the cause of this outcry, redoubled her efforts—and the people theirs; till every individual in the house were assembled in the tap-room—some dressed, but more just as they had been asleep. They then began to compare notes; and found that the ringing of the bell was the only cause of alarm; and, each retiring to their apartment, my mother's rushlight was blown out, and instead of her female companion, her lover followed, and took her place.—The discovery of the mistake was followed by the most specious arguments on his part, to prove, that, the ceremony being so near, the ridiculous prudery of making a new arrangement in the house would be productive of infinitely worse consequences than letting the matter pass;—that she must be sensible he could not be the contriver of the mistake, since it was very clear that Mrs. Edwards had likewise got into a bed she did not intend;—that another week would have made it a disposition he hoped, not disagreeable to her; and that, if it was her choice, as Providence had kindly anticipated their intentions, he would ride over to York in the morning, obtain a license, and marry her before she went to town;—and that, with respect to her father, as he meant to give her nothing, she need not be so tenacious of his approbation. She remarked upon the want of sentiment in the last argument; which he refined away; and, taking the advantage of her situation, convinced her, that fate was only kinder to them than they to themselves; and that whether they happened to be married on a Sunday or a Monday could not affect their future happiness.—In short, she was so circumstanced, that complaint was fruitless. She had now no chance but by retaining his affection, for she hoped but little from his honour or his principle; she therefore resolved to appear as chearful as possible, and avoid to upbraid him with what it was her best policy, on every account, to attribute, first to chance, and then to the infirmity of human nature, which the men never spare to enlarge upon in their own excuse, though they will seldom allow it as an argument for our unhappy sex, whose very strength is weakness, compared to theirs.—Her principal distress was, how to meet Mrs. Edwards;—she mentioned her embarrassment to him; but was presently set easy upon that subject. He said, that Mrs. Edwards was a woman in years; that she must know how natural it was for a man to seize

an opportunity so happily thrown in his way by fortune; and that, if she chose it, she might say that they were privately married before she left school. To this however she gave an absolute negative;—she might be unhappy, she said, but she would not be base—a lie was in itself so contemptible, that she wondered even infidels, who thought not of the sin, could be insensible of the meanness of a deviation from the truth—that she would avoid it ever. He smiled at her simplicity; and told her, that he would not attempt to influence her sentiments—that her actions were all he had a right to command; and that, if she wished to oblige him before marriage, as a proof that she would obey him after, the best earnest she could give him of future happiness would be, to desist from visiting her father, to return with him to his own house, and to take immediate possession of him and it, by acting as mistress of it.—She was shocked at the proposal;—her father's recent kindness, her own situation, and his baseness, all passed in review before her; and filled her with such horror as the recollection still gives to your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R L X I X .

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

AS soon as breakfast was over, the subject was renewed; and Mrs. Edwards, who was less surprized than my mother expected, joined in all the arguments that were in favour of the point; said, that their marriage was a subject much talked of for several months all round the country; that, if she returned as Mrs. Thompson, nobody was authorized to ask any questions when or where the ceremony took place;—that she, for her part, would never be the person to throw a doubt upon the matter; but that, if they would agree between themselves what should be said upon the subject, she would always, in all companies, make her declarations coincide with theirs.—My mother, whose honest and ingenuous nature was shocked at the ready disposition to falsehood in a woman no way interested in the deception, interrupted her impatiently.—“Mrs. Edwards!” says she, “what need of so many lies, upon a subject where truth would cost less trouble? I am not married—why should any body say I am? why should Mr. Thompson allow me the happy consciousness of telling truth without blushing for it? He said last night, he would marry me this morning—why do you not, Sir, (applying herself to him) go to York, as you said you would, and procure the licence? why am I kept in suspense, in a strange place, without a friend, without a parent, without my innocence, which would have enabled me to seek and find both?—He told her that, however his passion for her might have hurried him beyond the bounds of prudence, he was not to be taught what he owed to her, and to himself;—that he did not love obligations to people he did not like; and that, as her father had shewed himself an unnatural kind of man to her, he had rather not owe him the civility of asking him to his house—and that therefore he would not go to his;—that, as to marriage, he thought it only made people quarrel, and live uneasily together, when they knew they could not separate; but that, for his part, he loved her so well, that he could not refuse her any thing she should ask for herself; and that therefore, if she made it a point, notwithstanding her dislike to the state, he would marry her; but the time must be left to him; and that, mean time, his heart, his house, his purse, were open to her; and that, as the world would judge and talk upon certain old-fashioned principles, he should think she had better avail herself of Mrs. Edwards’s kind and friendly advice, than, by a romantick attachment to what she called probity and integrity, and such stuff, proclaim her own shame, and make it inconsistent with his situation in the world ever to call her his wife.”—I am shocked at the picture I have drawn of a man from whom I derive my being;—but such I am afraid are the pictures of more than half mankind—fawning, and acquiescent, till they have nothing more to ask; then, insolent, and reproachful, and ungrateful!—upbraiding the unhappy victims of their artifice with those crimes which, in the eye of a just and impartial God, as they have originated with, must be chargeable upon themselves!—Such was his conduct from that first day, till the last day of my poor mother’s slavery; and that last day closed her eyes in peace.—But to return to the immediate point.—Mrs. Edwards again joined her employer, for such he appeared to be;—and my mother, whose innocent mind was as long as possible blind to

the scheme, now saw that her ruin was concerted.—She wept, she railed; but she was in their power, and she had no alternative but to go home a contented partner of her seducer's infamy, or seek a refuge either from her father or her governess;—the former, her own mind forbad—the latter it shewed as almost equally horrid.—To seek protection from a father whose kindness was but new-born,—under circumstances so disgraceful as to stagger even the tenderness of a good mother, seemed to give a negative even to itself; and to return to the school, from whence a confederate in his villainy came, seemed as improper as to stay with him.—At last, she resolved to advise with the woman of the house they were in—(Necessity suggests strange counsel!)—and, with a few guineas in her pocket, to seek some private retreat from shame, till she should by letters find the reception she was likely to meet with at either of her former homes.—How this scheme would have succeeded, it is impossible to ascertain; for, upon going out of the room, to search for the mistress of the house, she found them all in close conversation; and, upon seeing her the woman articulated aloud, “Very well, Sir, the horses are ready, and I dare to say the lady will know her own good, and not refuse your honor when you offers so handsomely;”—and, then turning to my mother,—“Miss,” says she, “I hope as how you won't stand in your own light, the gentleman's a proper likely gentleman, as one would wish to see in a summer's day.”—My mother, seeing that she was pre-engaged, stopped her harangue; and, despairing of any rescue there, she gave herself up without making an answer, and suffered my father to hand her into the coach, resolving in her own mind to make her escape at the inn where they should put up at night.—With this hope she preserved a degree of cheerfulness through the day; and her companions began to think that she had made her last efforts, and would now rest contented.—they traveled near an hundred miles that day, but it was all across the country; and my uncle Charles being at that very period put under the tuition of a relation who was a clergyman, and kept an academy about ninety miles from London, arrived with his tutor at the same inn, and the same hour, as they did.—My mother, the moment she saw Charles, ran to him, and in the presence of the clergyman, who, though she had head of, she never saw, called him her guardian angel, and her deliverer from vice and infamy.—Mr. Randall was astonished, and desired her to explain herself;—which she did with so much artless sincerity, and undissembled innocence, that, confiding her and her brother to the care of a gentleman who accompanied him, he instantly rushed out in search of her betrayer.—As soon as they met; Mr. Randall declared himself, and his business—told him that, though a minister of the gospel whose characteristic was peace and forgiveness of injuries and whose precepts had ever been his rule of life, so far as respected himself; yet that, in defence of injured innocence, the sword of religion itself would wield with honour—that either Miss Clement's infamy must be sunk in Mrs. Thompson's recovered honour, or Mr. Thompson's life must be staked with his.—The firmness of his manner, and the reverence of his aspect, for he was between fifty and sixty, struck the guilty heart with momentary remorse.—A messenger was dispatched for a license; and the whole party stayed at the inn, till Mr. Randall himself performed the ceremony.—On the Tuesday morning they set out for my father's house; Mrs. Edwards, whose past conduct rendered her hateful to my mother, having proceeded (as she said) on her way to London. As soon as they arrived, the tenants and neighbours came to welcome my mother, whose heart, broken as it was by his severe injunctions, never to see nor think of one of her own

relations, was but ill-qualified to give them reception.—The recollection of her sufferings is too painful. Allow a pause to your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXVII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

MY grandfather having waited a fortnight, with the utmost impatience, for a return to his letter, sent a servant express with another to the school, supposing the former to have miscarried.—Mrs. Monson (the governess), who had heard from her sister the whole transaction, wrote an answer, just to inform him that his daughter was married to a Mr. Thompson, a gentleman of considerable fortune in the county of York, and was gone home to her own house.—That, when she left school, it was her intention to have waited on him previous to her marriage; but that she understood that some accident had happened on the road, which prevented her from carrying that design into execution;—and, giving him her address, referred him to herself for particulars.—As soon as the servant returned, he wrote to my mother, chiding her, though gently, for not permitting him to have the satisfaction of disposing of her hand to the man of her choice; reminded her that she had no opposition to expect from the style of his letter, which he found she had received—and concluding with a very kind invitation to her and her husband, to be present at her sister Rachael's wedding, whom he was going to give, by her own desire, to the son of a worthy friend of his, who was just returned from the Indies, where he had gone when a child, and had brought over an ample fortune.—There is nothing so painful to a generous mind, as to be loaded with kindness which it cannot repay:—how heavy then must be the burden, if one dare not even acknowledge it!—Such was my mother's unhappy situation.—Her letters came opened to her hands; nor did she dare to write one, without the restriction of a similar exhibition.—As soon as she received this, she begged permission to thank her father, if it was not agreeable to accept of his invitation;—remonstrated upon the unkindness of such a prohibition, as excluded the reciprocity of Nature's duties; that her being his wife did not cancel the ties of daughter, nor of sister; and pointed out the large field which such restraint might prove for future uneasiness.—This, to a man of feeling or of understanding, might have had some weight; but my poor father was innocent of any such possessions;—his property was his only boast, and, speak of what you would, he was sure to answer you by a display of his independence.—This indeed is the prevalent error of all those, who, born to no hopes, and educated with no prospect, by any unfortunate chance come to the possession of a fortune disproportionate to their little souls—therefore, in that single point, exterior circumstances might be culpable;—but the superior cruelty of his heart could proceed only from itself.—In short, he took upon him to answer the letter himself, upon a principle of false delicacy, similar to that of a man who married a woman knowing her to be in love with another; and after they were married, though in circumstances where common honesty called for every exertion of their talents for the support of their family, refused to suffer her to obtain, by a laudable use of hers, a very considerable sum, lest other men should impertinently fall in love with her.—O sentiment! sentiment! how art thou perverted! Similar to this was my father's reason for answering my grandfather's letter himself—it was inconsistent, he said, with his feelings, that a wife of his should

correspond with any man but himself; and yet, with all that delicacy, he would in all companies, and even before his servants, upbraid her with a circumstance, which to a mind ill-inclined, would have given a sufficient license to take, or to allow, any liberties that could be devised.—He did write; and not only refused his father-in-law's invitation, but threw such a damp upon their future intercourse, that they seldom met above once a year for the remainder of their lives.—In the course of ten months from their ill-fated marriage, my mother had a son; and, about two years after, my wretched existence began.—The first sounds I could discover, were those of discord, reproach, quarrels, and upbraidings.—My poor mother's temper was soured by a succession of cruelties; and his was of such a kind, that every thing, which to another man would become a blessing, to him was the bitterest curse.—Avarice was his predominant passion; and all his other humours, good or bad, were tinged with that.—When my brother was born, instead of rejoicing, as many, even bad men, would have done, on such an occasion, he began to calculate the difference an additional servant would make in house-keeping.—When he was ill, his anxiety was not whether his child should die or recover; but was always greater or less in proportion to the length of the apothecary's bill:—at last, after two years of grudging to my poor brother William, I came to add to my father's expence and his consequent misery.—My mother, whose tenderness still dwells upon my memory, and carries my gratitude even to her tomb, denied herself every ornament and superfluous expence, and, supplying herself scantily even with necessaries, laid out the remains of her small allowance upon the little decorations of our persons;—nor do I suppose that, whilst she lived, we ever cost my father a shilling, except our support and that of our nurses.—'Twas lucky that they had no more children; for, sour as he was at our obtruding ourselves upon his domestic oeconomy, I don't know how he would have welcomed a third.—When I was about ten years old, my brother, who was just twelve, was sent to an academy at Lichfield, and at fourteen, being a lad of remarkable capacity, was forwarded to Cambridge, where the unfortunate cause of my introduction to you was just entered. The young men presently commenced acquaintance; and, as William and I had always loved each other with the utmost tenderness, I suppose he often talked of me to his friend, who was well, too well prepared, at our first meeting, to find my heart in its defenceless state of innocence, and to make it all his own.—Once in about three years we went to London—and the last visit I made it, within the circle of my own family, was the year that you and my uncle Charles were married.—Every where we went, we saw you both, and saw you always together.—There is something very conciliating to a young mind in a picture of domestick happiness: it views it with a double pleasure, as an object of admiration, and as an inspirer of hope.—When we see others happy, we naturally look to the time when we may partake the same felicity.—In every attention my uncle paid you, I saw Charles Mason; and fancy assisting the deception, placed myself in your situation, borrowed your merit, tried on your graces and your accomplishments; and, like an inspired actor, who, when he personates a hero, looks on the external trappings of the character, and fancies himself the man;—so I, placed by the blind god whose votary I was, in your situation, saw myself, loving like you, deservedly beloved.—My father, whose prejudice against my uncle Charles for his accidental rescue of my mother when yet a child, was not in the least subsided, would never suffer us to know, or be known to him.—I remember to hear my mother say, that, when I was about two years old, she contrived to see my uncle by a stratagem, which was so near costing her life, that she

could never dare to repeat it.—So, in spite of our wishes, we were obliged to leave town without a single interview.—My brother grew so fine a boy, that his father could not avoid taking some notice of him;—by way of indulgence, he allowed him to bring home a friend at every vacation-time:—he did so;—but that friend was always Charles Mason. In short, we loved each other; and, conscious as we were of having no intentions but such as were prompted by nature, and warranted by innocence and virtue, we indulged them without restraint, to the unutterable misery of

Your poor

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXI.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

THE last visit but one, which we had from my brother and Charles during my dear mother's lifetime, she saw in my manner something that alarmed her; and, calling me into her closet, she began in words something like these: "My dear Amelia, says she, you are tottering on the brink of a precipice, from which no hand but that of a divine over-ruling Power can snatch you;—yet, as a mother, my duty calls upon me to warn you; as a child, you owe me a serious hearing, and a candid declaration of your real sentiments."—My mother had always taken the happiest method of securing my confidence; from my earliest infancy, she taught me to consider her as my friend, my companion, my instructor, and my partial judge.—There was not a thought of my heart that I would wish to conceal from her; therefore, requesting her to explain her meaning, I promised her to deal with every degree of candour and truth towards her that she had through my life practised towards me, and inculcated upon me for my general conduct.—She then told me, that she had observed an unusual gaiety and gloominess, by turns, to take possession of my mind at the times when Charles Mason was in our family—particularly this last vacation;—that she, for her own part, saw no objection to the young man; on the contrary, that she thought very highly of both his head and his heart; but you know, my dear, says she, that it is neither your opinion, nor mine, that can dispose of you—have a care, therefore, Amelia; for, should you place your whole hopes of happiness upon one object, and that object should happen not to please your father—misery must ensue;—you know how peremptory he is;—you know too how absolutely destitute I am of the power to serve you; precluded by my husband's tyranny from the converse of my father for many years before his death, I was not considered in the distribution of his fortune; and, scantily as I have been provided with the annual supply of my own and my children's expences, it has not been in my power to make the least provision for a case where his displeasure might affect you.—Should he see half so much as I have done, I tremble for the consequences;—check then, in time, my dear girl, the approaches of a passion which has so many chances against it.—She paused; and I replied,—and, with all the openness of an honest heart, unveiled the inmost feelings of mine. I told her, that I certainly had a very tender friendship for Charles; and that I had some reason to think my father saw, and did not disapprove it;—that he had even jested with me upon the subject, with more than his accustomed share of pleasantry; and that I could not suppose, that he, who inveighed so loudly against other parents, for forcing their children's inclinations in marriage, however unhappy his temper, would practise the same cruelty himself. My mother cast a look of anguish and approbation; and prayed ardently to heaven, that I might never have cause to change my opinion.—About this time a Mr. Wilson, a man of mean extraction, who had amassed a great deal of money in a very unamiable manner, had met us at some neighbouring visit; and made, next day, proposals to my father; which he, to my great joy, rejected; nor could I ever since conceive by what motives he was actuated—unless it was that he had been hurt, when we dined together, at Wilson's

reaching out his hand to intercept a plate of soup, which the lady of the house had intended for my father.—Whether such claim to precedence saved me from the disagreeable arms of Wilson, to be sacrificed to the still more horrid monster whom you saw, or that my miserable moment was not yet arrived, I never could guess—probably both causes might coincide;—however that be, I then considered his refusal as an omen of his future indulgence to my passion for Charles.—Of what folly is not a youthful mind, under the influence of passion, capable!—I soon after, however, was undeceived.—The next York races we were present; and a sportsman, who happened to be very successful, elate, perhaps, with that very circumstance, saw, or fancied he saw, me with eyes of love.—He enquired my name, sought out my father, and instantly made proposals for me; which, to my utter confusion and astonishment, he accepted, on condition that he settled eleven thousand pounds, which he had won at the races, irrevocably upon me. The monster consented; and a Mr. Perrin, an attorney at York, was employed to draw up the writings, and desired to keep the matter entirely secret, lest it should reach me; for it seems they did not intend that any questions should be asked till the very morning on which I was to be married.—Mean time, the horse-jockey spent almost every hour at our house, and gave us the pedigree of every horse upon the turf;—talked learnedly of spavins and splinters; the methods of cure; the best diet for runners, and the difference between them and draught or saddle horses; and was sure to enforce every argument with some similies, in which *my* person, and that of an hostler's wife, or our own dairy-maid, were sure to make capital figures.—A fortnight passed in this manner; and frequently, in the course of this time, my poor mother, who was in the secret, and did not dare either to communicate it to me, or to make an effort to oppose it, has been chid, and sent out of the room, when her heart has filled at the idea of a child whom she tenderly loved, being sacrificed to such a being, whose whole train of ideas were confined to a stable.—My father, perhaps, of all men that ever lived, was most obstinate in his conversation, and most flexible in his actions.—The person he most esteemed in the world was my mother; but I believe he was scarcely sensible of it himself;—certain it is, that she was one of the last persons in it who could influence him in any thing;—narrow in his own ideas, he always suspected others of being interested in all they said or did; and, in proportion as they were nearly connected with him, he suspected them of design in every word they spoke.—Upon this principle it was, that my mother was totally disregarded in the hints which she ventured to drop of Mr. Wallace's fortune being always precarious;—that a man, who could win eleven thousand in one day, might as probably lose it another;—that its being settled upon me, in a piece of parchment, was no security for his not hazarding it on the race-ground;—and that it would be poor compensation, in such a case, for a wife, or her trustees, to sue and imprison a husband.—All this he heard without regard; nay, sometimes laughed at her folly, and sometimes chid her impertinence; till, after ten or twelve days, she began to give up the point in despair, and even, at his absolute command, set about buying my cloaths; though she considered it as dressing out a lamb for sacrifice.—Mr. Perrin, however, who was a very honest man, and father of a large family, over whom he exercised a very different kind of parental authority, took the pains to enquire into the character of my elected lord; and found him, by the universal voice of all that knew him, a noted sharper; and, what perhaps served my cause more, that he had been detected in a fraud the night before at York, and was obliged to make free with three of the eleven thousand, which my father was in love with, to hush the matter into

peace.—My father was disappointed; and he shewed it: but my poor mother, whose heart was relieved from a load of misery, broke out into exclamations of gratitude to heaven, and Mr. Perrin, whom she considered as my deliverer. Mr. Perrin said little in return; but taking the writings out of his pocket, looked at my father, and saying, “With your permission, Sir!” threw them into the fire; and, for that time, saved

Your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS CLEMENT,

in continuation.

SOON after this escape from one source of misery, another, more fatal to my peace and my mother's life, ensued.—My father, though he did not love his children with much tenderness, had an ambition to leave them in such situations as to make a figure in the world; especially my brother, who was now a very fine scholar, and had displayed understanding and abilities to give wings to a parent's fondest hopes. My father's principal ambition was to have him in parliament; with this idea, he thought it better to sell out of York, which he considered as supplied for many years to come; and buy into some other county.—This scheme he communicated to Mr. Perrin, who was very famous for buying and selling estates. About eight months of tolerable tranquillity succeeded the storm I have just recited; in which time my brother brought Charles home again, and saw us plight vows of eternal love; when Mr. Perrin, who had endeared himself to us all, came over one day, just as we had sat down to dinner, and told my father, that he had a chapman in his eye for his Yorkshire estate; and that, if he could strike that bargain before he could conveniently meet with an object in his own idea, there was a pretty little house, with a few acres, where he and his family might reside, till a purchase in one of the counties he wished for should offer; but that he must sell directly, if at all, as the Nabob was impatient to purchase, and would, he believed, be down in two or three days.—My father, who thought all happiness consisted in being rich, asked, with great eagerness, whether the Nabob was a single man? Mr. Perrin answered, "I believe so, Sir; but he is past fifty; so he will not do for miss Thompson."—"I don't know that, says my father; Amelia is not such a fool, I hope, as to think her age any rule for her husband's." My mother was going to speak; but he stopped her mouth with, "Come, Madam, don't you fill the girl's head with notions like your own;—I think you refused a man of fifty at her age, did not you? and what have you been the better for it? You refused him, I remember, to marry me—and now we are both growing old together—so that where is the difference whether a man first grows old, and then his wife? or whether one combs a grey head, and the other shaves a grey beard, at the same time?" There was a mixture of pleasantry in this ill-natured recapitulation, that did not always appear, to soften his rebukes; yet it was sufficiently well mixed to convey just what he intended—a jest to Mr. Perrin, but a dagger to my poor mother's heart;—and it was felt accordingly. She was effectually silenced; and I did not venture upon so dangerous a subject: besides, I don't know whether all young people feel as I did; but there is still an internal support, derived from hope, that aided me in every conflict.—My heart would fill, and often overflow, for my mother's sufferings, which were, for the last six years, principally on my account; but for myself, I seldom wept, or even apprehended any ill, though ever so probable, till it actually came upon me.—Then I had read of daughters who had been persecuted by fathers to the very eve of marriage, and had by prayers and tears disarmed the cruelty of such unnatural parents, and escaped the threatened evil.—Nor was I destitute of that confidence (at least I thought so) which is derived from religion, and which generally

preserves its votaries.—But whether I was too confident, and ascribed more merit to myself than I possessed;—or whether it pleased the Almighty to suffer me to be particularly wretched, as a warning to others who come after me;—or whether a balance of happiness be yet in store—(Oh flatterer! flatterer! not gone yet)—requires more sagacity than I am mistress of to find out. Certain it is, that I always acted to the best of my judgement, and, so far as I could be acquainted with my own heart, with the best intentions towards others as well as myself—and yet—have been most miserable—and, what pains my heart most in recollection, have made my dear Charles more wretched than myself, for I have made him guilty.—About three days after, Mr. Perrin returned, and brought Mr. Wolfe with him, for that was the intended purchaser's name. I was covering some grapes, that stood north, with a piece of matting; and, turning about for a nail, which the servant held, I saw them enter the court-yard, and dropped off the steps.—The recollection of what had passed, the fear of what might come, and the new cause of grief I was likely to prove to the best of mothers, mixed in my idea, and produced an absolute whirlwind, for so it seemed to my feeling.—The gentlemen ran up to me, and raised me; and, as I walked in, supported by both, I heard the Nabob exclaim to Perrin, “By G—d! She's the handsomest creature I ever saw! why did you not tell me this? and you might have asked what you pleased for the purchase.”—It is amazing of what inconsistent materials the human mind is formed! I have promised to lay open all the weaknesses of mine—and therefore am obliged to confess, that notwithstanding my unbounded affection for Charles—the fear of my father's authority being used to force me to marry any man who could bid well—my resolution never, whilst I had life, to consent to such a step;—I say, notwithstanding all this, I felt an unspeakable joy in being able at one glance to inspire a passion so ardent as his expression seemed to declare;—I wished that it might increase—and yet resolved not to return it.—Whence then could that arise? 'Twas surely vanity.—I have often entered into a conversation with other young ladies who had the same feelings, as indeed most pretty women at a certain age have; from them I could never extort a similar confession; but, when I have taken my own heart to task, I have always brought it to that declaration.—From fourteen to twenty are the most dangerous years of a woman's life;—'tis then a mother's eye is most absolutely necessary.—What a madness then, at such a period, to trust a daughter to the care of a person who has no tie but a pecuniary one! how many thousands feel the fatal effects of it! A mother, a *sensible* mother, who pretends not to be ignorant of Nature's imperfections, is the only governess for her own daughter;—yet, must her care be *delicately* applied—steering clear of low suspicion, which provokes; and of injudicious severity, which makes desperate.—Such was the conduct of my dear mother towards me; and, whilst *she* lived, my guardian angel never slept.—But, deprived of her, I lost my pilot, and soon my little bark, blown about by youthful vanity and youthful passion, shipwrecked on a father's cruelty!—Mr. Wolfe was as absolutely enamoured as my vanity would have desired; but he had a heart too good for his fate.—As soon as he entered the parlour, he told my father that he did not doubt but that he should like his house and his estate, which upon that opinion he was ready to purchase; but that his mind was so entirely engrossed by the beauty of his daughter, that though to talk of purchasing *that* would be to blaspheme its maker, he should be happy to know how he could merit the possession of it;—that Mr. Perrin knew his fortune; and that, when he had charged upon it five hundred pounds a-year for his mother's life, it would double its value in his

esteem by being settled upon Miss Thompson as his wife.—My father was greatly delighted, and, sending for my mother, repeated Mr. Wolfe's proposal, which he confirmed; and, my mother being greatly pleased with his appearance and manner, and despairing of any other way to get out of this affair without my father's eternal displeasure, she undertook to communicate the matter to

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXIII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

AFTER my fall, I had been put to bed, where notwithstanding my past agitation, or perhaps harassed by its violence, I soon fell asleep.—My mother came up to my room, and, taking a book, sat by my bed-side till I awoke;—then, after such enquiries as her tenderness prompted, she told me that she had a commission from my father, which she was obliged to execute, and hoped I would not be so averse to what he now proposed as on former occasions, as she had seen and conversed with Mr. Wolfe, and approved of him so much in that little time, that she could wish I would at least deliberate before I absolutely refused.—I burst into tears, and told her, that my heart was not my own; that, in my brother's presence, and with his approbation, I had exchanged vows of fidelity with Charles;—that, if I were to marry another man, I should not be able to make him a good wife;—that, notwithstanding all her sufferings with my father, she must have been supported by remembering that he was the man of her choice; but that, had she received similar treatment from another man, she could not, with all her native goodness of heart, have done with such persevering merit her duty.—She shook her head, and replied, “My dear Amelia—that is the mode of judging natural to nineteen; at your age, I should probably have reasoned in the same manner; but it is a delusive medium through which you look; it is the medium of passion. Or call it reason—I have as many arguments to apply on the other side of the question, and they shall be reason too.—All human attributes are imperfect, and none more so than reason;—for instance, in the very case in point—why may I not expect you to believe me, when I say, that, perhaps, the recollection of your father being the man of my choice has added a new sting to every mortification I have suffered from his caprice and his cruelty?—It is certainly true, and yet I grant your arguments found well too.—Had I married the man my father proposed to me, I had not had the painful remembrance of disobeying a parent.—He might have behaved better to me than Mr. Thompson—so far I had been happier;—had he behaved worse (though that is almost impossible), I should not have had the occasions for reproach and upbraiding, which, with all the patience I could muster, I have not always been able to forbear; nor had he an opportunity of putting me in mind of a weakness, which (though my will did not then consent to it), my virtue, had I not loved the object, and feared to have lost him, would have secured me against, though at the expence of my life.”—Here we were interrupted by a message from my father, who had finished his own bargain, and was so anxious to settle mine, that he had insisted upon the gentleman's staying all night, that, if I was not able to come down that evening, he might be sure to see me in the morning.—I resolved to take advantage of my illness for that evening. However, next day came; I got up and dressed myself; happy in my mother's assurances, that, though she wished me to acquiesce, she never would be instrumental in putting a constraint upon me, which she had ever condemned when practised by other parents towards their children.—I went down, and was introduced by my mother, who apologized for my not having come down the evening before, by reciting the accident I

had had, and the necessity there was for endeavouring to get me to sleep off the consequences.—Mr. Wolfe came up to me, and enquired into the nature of the accident, which I explained; and, tea being brought, my father called out across the room, with abundance of good-humour and apparent tenderness—“Come, you little tumbler, entertain us now with the feats of your hands; they will be pleasanter than that of your heels:”—then, opening my harpsichord, took me by the hand, and desired me to play one of Handel’s concerto’s, whilst my mother made tea.—After I had trembled over the keys some of the most horrid discord that can be imagined, for I had not the least use of my fingers—and the gentlemen said as many civil things as they could have done to Handel for his composition; I returned to the tea-table, and my father began upon his favourite theme of oeconomy—displayed his eloquence upon farming, gardening, and the cheap methods he had found out of educating his children, by making my mother teach us to read, himself to write, the parish-clerk to sing, and the organist to play on the harpsichord:—The fact is, he was very ingenious in that same science of frugality; and if it be a virtue—I am afraid it was the only virtue he possessed.—Mr. Perrin kept up the chat; but Mr. Wolfe seemed to be lost in thought; and, having asked and obtained my father’s permission to speak to me upon the subject next his heart, he came up to me, and, with a great deal of manly steadiness, and yet the whole of a lover’s tender apprehension, he said—“Miss Thompson, a business the most fortunate, I trust, of my whole life, brought me to your father yesterday, without knowing that he was happy in the possession of such a daughter.—The moment I saw you, which was after you had fallen from the vine, my heart received an impression it never had before.—After you retired to your apartment, in a conversation with your father and Mr. Perrin, I have discovered that my name had been mentioned in your presence, with the forbidding accompaniments of being a nabob, and fifty years of age.—Perhaps those mistakes may have prejudiced me in your opinion, and in the chance I might otherwise have had in your heart; it is therefore essential to my happiness, that I say a few words upon that subject.”—My father laughed out aloud,—“Lord! Sir,” says he, “how little you must know of women, to suppose that your being a nabob should hurt you in their esteem! Why they will have the better opportunity of being extravagant;—and, as to your age, that is a palpable mistake.—Why, he is young enough, miss! is not he? he is almost as young as your favourite Charles.” I suppose my looks told tales; for Mr. Wolfe exclaimed, “Good God! I am too late; her heart is given to another; and, with that defect, her face and form, beautiful as they are, would want the power to bless me!”—Then, turning to me, “I beg your pardon, madam, says he, for so bold a supposition—your own delicacy will be a sufficient security for their going together.”—My Father was mad with himself; he bit his lips, and rubbed his hands—and, at last, broke out, “Lord! lord!” he cried, “how absurd your men of vast sensibility always are! Why Charles is only a play-fellow of her brother’s—a poor parson’s son, that I used to invite home at vacation-times, to save his father the expence of an additional mouth.—Eh, Amelia! is not that the case?”—My blood boiled resentment;—if I had not struggled hard, I must have said something he would never have forgiven.—“Speak! girl,” says he. I answered, “Sir, it is impossible for me to dive into your motives for inviting my brother’s friend to your house; had it been only to gratify so deserving a son, I should have thought that reason sufficient;—if your motives were of that generous nature you have just mentioned, they were hitherto hid within your own breast; the properest situation, in my opinion, for them to have remained

in." Mr. Wolfe insensibly took my hand: "Oh, miss Thomson! says he, may I look to that face, dwell upon those accents, breathing unutterable sense and sweetness, and may I hope that the possessor may be mine?"—My heart was torn; had I never seen Charles, nay, had I not bound myself to be his, I should have given up the struggle.—I saw in my present lover every perfection I loved in Charles; and, with those perfections, my parents' wishes—a competent fortune, and the blessing of bestowing happiness upon a worthy man, but Charles, my brother, and my recent vows yet warm upon my lip, checked the yielding thought; and, bursting from the room, I left the men to their conclusion, and my mother to a new persecution for her

AMELIA.

LETTER LXXIV.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

I had run up to my room, and thrown myself in a great chair; and was revolving within my own mind the unfortunate situation into which a few words, spoken in the warmth of an undivided heart, had plunged, not only myself, but my father, my mother, and a deserving man (for such I persuade myself Mr. Wolfe must be), and even, in all probability, Charles himself.—I began to look back, with an eye of reason, over those rocks and quicksands which passion had borne me over on fancy's wings.—Charles had not a shilling—I, without my father's approbation of my marriage, must be equally destitute.—Was a marriage, on such terms, the road to happiness? Certainly, no. Was it likely, that, refusing a man to whom I could make no objection, my father, or even a better father, would ever consent to give me and a competence to a man whom he had thrown into such a light of contempt? Certainly, no.—Was it most my duty to persevere, in spite of conviction, to marry Charles, to the utter ruin of us both; and, perhaps to the miserable means of propagating beggars; of seeing those little innocent sufferers want the comforts of life, and hearing them, in the cries of nature, upbraid me as the cause;—or, by giving up a preference, make my parents smile, a worthy man happy, myself independent, my children, if I had any, ornaments to society, and blessings to mankind; and, at the same time, leave Charles free to make a happier choice, where his merit might render him equally acceptable, and where peace, plenty, and happiness, would be the substitutes for, perhaps, repentance, poverty, and woe?—This, I have often thought, was a flight beyond nineteen; but it was inspiration—it was the voice of heaven: happy had it been for us all, that I had persevered in the opinion!—but it was not to be. My mother, whom I had heard in her own room some time before, gently tapped at my door. I opened it; and, throwing my arms round her neck (for I saw she had been crying), I begged of her to forgive me the misery I had caused her; and told her, that I had run over the matter, and all its consequences, in my own mind; that I was convinced of my father's right and her's to dispose of me; and that henceforward I would be ruled by them.—She thanked me, and said, “that it might be of use on some other occasion; but that she believed Mr. Wolfe was gone for ever; and that my father was so enraged at the supposition, that she did not know that he would ever see me again;—that, at all events, he insisted upon my assigning some cause for the unpardonable rudeness I had been guilty of; otherwise she was commissioned to tell me, that my own apartment should be the extent of my liberty.”—I was shocked at being supposed capable of doing any thing from being threatened, that I should not more readily do from a principle of duty.—I told her so; and she replied, “My dear girl, you are not now to learn that your father don't think upon those refined principles; however, if you comply with his requisition, he will not trouble himself about the motives; let it be duty towards me—I love that compliance best.” Whilst we were in this conversation, a servant came to my door, and, speaking aloud at the outside, informed me, that there was a letter for me, to which my father expected I would send a proper answer. My mother opened the door; and, taking from his hand, she

put into mine, a letter from Mr. Wolfe; the seal of which, according to his usual delicacy, my father had broken, and no doubt perused its contents.—I read it through several times, my mother eagerly watching my looks; and, when I could no longer refrain from tears, she asked whether she might enquire the cause? I gave her the letter, and begged her to give me her sentiments upon it. She was as much at a loss as I was; nor could we either of us guess what my father meant by a proper answer. At last we resolved, that the likeliest mode of conciliating his mind, and the only one for coming at his opinion, was, for my mother to go down, tell him the circumstance of my girlish promise to Charles; and so, by discharging the first of his commands, obtain at least a little time, and perhaps a little indulgence respecting the latter. Happy in my assurance of perfect obedience, she left me; when I, to prevent improper thoughts returning, copied his letter, which I enclose.

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXV.

MR. WOLFE TO MISS THOMPSON.

MADAM,

THE singular occurrence of yesterday, and the effect it must produce upon your present and my future happiness, call upon me to explain my sentiments; and to leave it to your generosity, whether or not I may deserve a reciprocal attention from you. The moment I saw you leave the room in disorder, I thought it my duty to quit your house, because there seems a peremptory mode of proceeding in Mr. Thompson's manner, which, however his exertion of it might flatter me on this occasion, I am incapable of taking any advantage of. I love you, madam; very ardently and honestly love you;—but I love you as a man should—declining that happiness which must be dearly paid for at the expence of yours. I should again ask that pardon which you generously gave me yesterday, when an expression somewhat similar to this escaped me, on your father's mentioning some young gentleman's name, and attaching to it the happy epithet of your favourite;—but, madam, though I think as highly of your delicacy as I do of your beauty, I dread the influence of a father's authority, where it is used in a case so unavoidably productive of long years of happiness or misery.—Nor can I help censuring that parent, who attempts by violence, or, what would be more effectual towards a mind like that I conceive you to possess, soothing persuasion, to bias a child in the only action of their lives where only two peoples' consent should be considered as essentially requisite.—I have said thus much on the subject, however foreign, or rather opposite, it may seem to my purpose, only to convince you, how dear your happiness is in my estimation. If, after this, I should be happy enough to merit your distinction, I shall, with confidence equal to my love, take you to my arms, and put you in possession of an heart whose first beatings have been for you.

With respect to myself, my family and fortune, every particular shall be laid before you;—for the present, I will only say, that my ancestors have been, for many years back, men of fair characters and independent circumstances; but, their families enlarging within the last fifty years, my father, who was the youngest of nine children of a gentleman in the South of Ireland, was brought up to a reputable business; and, when I was about thirteen years of age, and the third of seven sons, at the earnest solicitation of a brother of my mother's, he suffered me to make a voyage to India—which has been so fortunate in its consequences, that in fourteen years I have made, by honest industry, unstained by human blood, a real fortune of sixty thousand pounds. Had I been less conscientious, I might have been more wealthy; but three or four thousand pounds a year, with a guiltless mind, is a richer possession to me, than as many millions, with the death or the curse of a fellow-creature annexed to it.—I mean to employ fifty thousand in purchasing estates;—ten thousand I have vested in the public funds, and settled its produce, for life, upon my mother; at her death, it is to be divided equally between three sisters and two brothers, who are all, out of twelve children of our parents, who survive to enjoy their brother's good fortune.—I thought this explanation my duty. If a heart untouched by any previous passion, in such a person as now offers it, can be found

worthy your acceptance, the future business of my life shall be to approve your election.—But if, unhappily for me! your heart is already bestowed—I may, I must, be miserable; but never will, by an unmanly persecution, make you so. For this reason I must beg that an answer to this candid declaration (if it is worthy of one) be written by yourself.—Be you candid in return; and, whether it brings happiness or misery, it will be a treasure to

Your most sincerely devoted

ANTHONY WOLFE.

L E T T E R LXXVI.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

MY mother staid a considerable time with my father; and then sent up for the letter.—As soon as it was gone, my thoughts again were free.—I began to think, that, were it possible for me to dissemble my feelings to Mr. Wolfe, and trust to time and his worth to give him that entire possession of my heart which his delicacy so well deserved; some untoward accident might discover my secret, and shew me to him in the light of an impostor—a horrid character!—How must such a man despise a woman capable of such a conduct!—and for me to behave ever so unexceptionally, after such a discovery, would only seem a well-acted hypocrisy:—besides, what kind of truce must I make mean time with myself? how appease those reproaches, which every little occurrence of life might furnish me with?—These reflections distracted me to a degree of irresolution what to say or do;—when my mother returned, with Mr. Wolfe’s letter in one hand, and an answer dictated by my father for me to copy in the other.—Had the contents been unexceptionable—the mode was in itself a falsehood.—Mr. Wolfe desired, he said, that it might be written by myself; but he did not say any thing about who should dictate.—These kind of literal truths, and substantial falsehoods, I was no stranger to; but my soul started with indignation from the practice of any thing so base.—My mother thought as I did; but it was not her business to say so on that occasion.—However, to bring matters as nearly as possible to a crisis, she proposed a medium, and told me, that, if I would write an answer, meaning the same as my father’s, she would endeavour to reconcile him to its being sent by the messenger, whom he had detained almost by force till it should be ready; and that the credit she had gained with him, from the message I had sent, and from a supposition that she had influenced my conduct, left her no apprehension of carrying that point.—As to my poor father’s dictation, it would have been impossible for any woman, worth a man’s having, to have avowed its language, or its sentiments; it was not consenting, it was asking—and that in terms not extremely delicate.—I took pen, ink, and paper; I began, and blotted; and at last I wrote the following:

“SIR,

THE delicacy of your sentiments, and the sincerity of that passion, of which, however unworthy I feel myself, I harbour not a doubt, demand every return of gratitude and esteem.—The subject is a delicate one, and, after the laudable conduct you have hitherto pursued, I am convinced you will excuse my enlarging upon it.—Happiness is your due—may you long enjoy it, as an encouragement to virtue; and a proof, that to be desirous of bestowing bliss is the surest road to attain it!—My father and mother present their compliments; and desire me to add, that they shall always think themselves honoured in your company.—I remain, Sir, with the sincerest prayers that heaven may send you every blessing you merit,

Your much obliged

AMELIA THOMPSON.”

My mother carried this down; and though my father did not think it sufficiently explanatory, and swore it was the worst letter he ever knew the fool the write, he sealed it, and suffered it to go.—I passed three days in a state of the most painful suspense; at the end of which, I received another letter from him, complaining of the uncertainty in which I left him, and begging that I would authorize him, either to believe or contradict a report he had heard, of my being on the point of marriage with a gentleman of the county of Worcester nine months before; and, if it was true, how far my own inclinations were concerned in breaking-off the match;—in short, whether my heart was disengaged, and, if so, whether he might entertain a hope—on which condition, he should not lose a moment in availing himself of my father and mother’s kind invitation; but that, if he was forbid to look forward to the possession of my affection, he hoped they would excuse him if he declined exposing himself to increase of love, and consequent despair.—This too, my father opened—and, embarrassed as he was at the recollection of the affair of Wallace, hinted at in his letter, he thought it a happy opportunity of convincing him, that my heart was free, and he was welcome to it (for that was the English of all his conversation on the subject); and desired me to refer him to his friend Mr. Perrin, who could answer that it was a matter rather concealed from, than promoted by me.—I wondered he was able to keep a steady countenance, whilst he talked to me on a point which so cruelly stigmatized his tyranny and unnatural behaviour.—But I suppose he had settled with his own conscience upon the account, and was not anxious what I thought of the matter.—I was, however, more distressed than before—for inevitable decision must be the purport of my reply.—I had three days to answer it; but the longer I thought, the more I was perplexed;—sometimes I resolved to give up Charles—my tongue could pronounce the resolution; but I was not sure of my heart;—besides, the before-mentioned considerations had convinced me, that even that would not be effectual; I had loved—perhaps did love still; and nothing but an heart untouched as his own could content, or be worthy of, Mr. Wolfe.—What then was to be done?—Why, I had been obliged to be honest, and declare my feelings and his absolute disappointment;—but death, that final close of human anxiety, released him from his suspense, and me from my embarrassment.—A nervous complaint, to which he had for years been subject upon any agitation of mind, returned with such violence, as to deprive him first of speech, and then three hours after of life.—As soon as he was seized, he expected it would end fatally;—and, sending for Mr. Perrin, he made a new disposition of his effects—dividing the fifty thousand amongst his mother, brothers, and sisters; and bequeathing the ten thousand pounds in the funds to me.—The day after I had received his last letter, I was sitting at my window, thinking how I should express myself so as to give him least pain—and how to dispose of myself, when my father should put his threat into execution;—for he had repeatedly declared, that, if I should be such an unfortunate slut as to lose Mr. Wolfe by my ridiculous prudery, I should find shelter any where else—for his roof was no longer a covering for me.—In this state of mind, I saw a clerk of Mr. Perrin’s, who had been at our house before, enter the court-yard.—His first appearance struck me with a horror I cannot

express—though I little supposed why.—In three minutes after, my mother came up stairs—and throwing herself in a chair, and bursting into tears, cried, “Oh, my ill-fated child! what will become of thee now?” “For heaven’s sake! madam, what is the matter?”—She could not speak for some minutes; at length, recovering herself, she told me, “That Mr. Wolfe was just expired, when Mr. Perrin, who had made a new will for him to the purport I have related, sent away the clerk with the instrument, which was indeed rather a deed of gift than a will, and which was best and safest in my possession;—and that my father, my inhuman father, snatching it from his hand, had torn it into pieces, and, throwing the remnants into the fire, swore (with the bitterest and most fearful imprecations on himself if he broke his oath) that I not only should not profit by the weakness of a man whom I had murdered; but that I should from that moment be an alien to his heart and his house;—and had desired her, on pain of equal punishment, to prepare me for quitting his house instantly, and for ever.—Her first thought was to send me to the miller’s wife who nursed me, and who gave ready welcome to

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXVII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

FROM the time of my quitting the house, for near a month, my dear mother came to see me, at some time or other of every day, according to the opportunities which his engagements gave her.—One evening, as she crossed three fields, between her house and ours, full of beans in blossom, the dews being extremely heavy, her shoes and stockings, and indeed most of her cloaths, were wet.—When she went home, he was returned from a visit which she expected would have engaged him longer; and she did not dare to go up to change her cloaths, lest he should ask any questions that might lead to a discovery of where she had been; besides, though he treated her so cruelly, he could not bear to be without her.—She therefore sat out the time of supper, and, having passed a restless night, got up the next morning with a sore throat.—She was scarce able to walk about the house; but she dreaded a confinement, which must prevent her from seeing me: she therefore resolved to make an effort towards one visit more, but was so ill that she was obliged to return before she had got half-way to the mill.—That day passed—another, and another, and I neither saw, nor heard from her.—My heart was breaking.—I ran over all the conversation that had passed between us, and could not recollect any the least cause of offence; besides, she was not that kind of parent. On the evening of the third day, I was sitting in the little garden behind the house, and a pretty little boy about three years old, belonging to the miller's son, upon my lap—when another child came running to us, crying, “The squire! the squire!” Convinced that this exclamation announced my father, I set down the child, and from my first impulse ran to throw myself at his feet—when, with a countenance more softened than I could have hoped, though with an averted face, he raised me, and said, “Your mother wants you, Amelia.”—“Where! where, Sir, is my dear mother?—I have not seen her these three days.”—“So then! he replied, she has been here! and her disobedience is like to cost her dear.”—“Oh, Sir, be not angry with my dear parent, nor call her maternal tenderness by so harsh a name;—’twas not you she disobeyed, for you yourself are come to see your unhappy child; ’twas only your passion, your resentment, that forbad her; but nature, powerful nature, brought her here!—Where! where is she now?”—He was much affected.—“She is at home in bed—not well—go to her.”—All this he spoke, or I fancied it; and, without the ceremony of hat or cloak, I flew to the house, and, hurrying up to the bed-chamber, found her in a violent fever—a blister on her back, and leeches on her temples;—and, at the instant I entered, perceived by her incoherent ravings that her brain was turned by the apprehensions she suffered for me.—She reiterated, “You are her father, why will you banish her? O my child! my child!” I tore open the curtains, and, throwing myself upon the bed by her, told her I was come to restore peace; that my father had relented, and himself had brought me home.—She did not immediately know me; but, in a few minutes after, my father coming in, she raised herself on her elbow, and, looking at us both by turns for a long time, she burst into a flood of tears, which recovered her senses; and, as soon as she could speak, she held out her hand to him, and said, “Oh, Mr. Thompson, take my Amelia to your heart, restore her

to a father's bosom, and shelter her from the world!—My miseries be forgotten!—and may those undeserved sufferings, which for two-and-twenty years I have endured, fall to the ground, and be buried in my grave!”—He did not say much, but looked as if he was affected, and, taking out his keys, which he generally kept himself, gave them to me.—My mother's agitation had increased her fever, and brought on the delirium again;—so he left the room; and I sat down by her bed-side till she got into a dose, from which—she never awoke.—About an hour after, she fell asleep; the nurse, who thought she lay too still, put her head between the curtains, then in great haste flew to the dressing-table, and, bringing the glass, soon discovered that she was breathless.—The state of my mind at her declaration, I will not attempt to describe;—nor need I, to you.—My father was called; and when he found that she was really dead, he shed tears of remorse, I believe, as well as grief; and, looking stedfastly in her face,—“And art thou gone, my faithful friend, my patient suffering wife!” he cried;—and, taking me by the hand, “Amelia! says he, follow thy mother's example in every thing but marriage—I did not deserve her!”—“Oh, Sir, I replied, why did you not awake to a sense of her merit, whilst you had it in your power to reward it?” Conscious as he was, he could not bear reproof, but left me, even then, in anger.—A messenger was dispatched express for my brother, who arrived in time to attend her funeral; and staid with us the remainder of the time between that and the vacation, when Charles, the fatal Charles! joined us.—My father behaved much better than usual, and even condescended in many instances to consult me upon undertakings he was engaged in. Charles, who saw the change as well as ourselves, took every occasion of remarking upon it; and, as he happened to be in great favour with my father, sometimes would tell us, in our moments of private, “that he had a mind to ask me of my father; that, in another year, he was to enter at the Temple, and could soon provide for a wife as well as any young man he knew.” This was talking like a young man in love. My brother saw the matter coolly, and opposed it with great zeal; as a certain loss of his acquaintance, which he greatly prized, must be the consequence. At length, the fatal time arrived, when they were to return to Cambridge for the last time.—The night before their departure, Charles, my brother, and I, were walking under a row of chestnut-trees before the door; and the subject of our future happiness was agitated.—I strengthened my brother's opinion, that it would be madness to mention it to my father; and that we had no chance but from time and persevering constancy.—Charles took this occasion to recapitulate all the circumstances of Mr. Wallace and Mr. Wolfe; both of whose stories he had heard, and pretty justly;—swore that he never would return to Cambridge in a state of doubt, whilst a chestnut-tree stood that could bear his weight; and, taking out his prayer-book, put it into my brother's hand, saying, “Now, William, by all the friendship you ever professed to me, by your sister's happiness and mine, which you know depends upon our union, and which union you say you have no objection to—I conjure you to read for us the ceremony, which will make us one, and set two breaking hearts at peace.—My brother objected, “that he was not in priests orders; and that his performance of the ceremony would not be binding.”—“Not legally so, says Charles; but can you suppose that in the sight of heaven one man is not as capable of giving due weight to the ceremony as another? or, rather, can you doubt the honest consent of two faithful hearts being in itself sufficient? Your performance of the ceremony will not entitle me to the possession of Amelia's fortune; but it will secure me the possession of all that is valuable, Amelia's self.”—In short, you will not wonder, that, having convinced my

brother, my consent was easily obtained; the moon shone bright, and thousands of stars illuminated heaven, and witnessed our espousals. Next morning the two beings nearest my heart on earth were divided from me—one to perish in a few hours; the other to live to greater misery, and die at last a martyr to my misfortunes. My dear brother, whose affection for me softened all the rigours of an austere parent, and supplied the loss of my tender mother, in the road to Cambridge, was thrown by his horse, and, pitching against a large piece of flint, which seemed almost laid there on purpose, expired on the spot—to the unspeakable distress of his friend and brother, and of his poor

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXVIII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

AS soon as the news of my brother's death arrived, my father's temper took a turn more unfortunate than it had before. Instead of being afflicted, he seemed angry—and raved, as if heaven had given him a bond for his son's immortality, and broke it.—I, for my part, was thrown into absolute despair; and my mind was so busied in itself, that I was for several weeks in a state of insensibility to every thing that passed in the world. The servants spoke to me, and I neither heard nor understood them, unless my father, whose presence I began to dread more than ever, was at my ear, to rouse me; and, indeed, his voice was the most powerful antidote to my lethargy.—Charles, whom I now considered as my husband, had no opportunity of writing to me; for I had charged him, as he valued my life, not to hazard a letter, which might discover our secret, to fall into my father's hands, who read all my letters before they came into mine. In this situation I passed four months after the death of my brother; when Mr. Perrin, who frequently passed a melancholy hour with us, called at our house. My father began to ask what purchases he had negotiated lately.—Mr. Perrin said, “he had bought an estate, about eighteen miles distant, belonging to a Mr. Wells, who was gone to reside in London, for the education of his children; and that he thought it an excellent bargain. The purchaser, he said, was a gentleman of the name of Merisford, who had made a very competent fortune in Turkey, where he had resided some years as a merchant, and was now returned to spend it in his native country. The house, he said, would require new painting and papering, before the new tenant took possession; but he believed that mean time he would lodge at the house of a brother of his (Mr. Perrin's); and that he expected him down in a fortnight.” My father asked no farther questions; and I wondered at it. I was not in a humour to be curious: so the conversation ended; and after tea he went away.—I could not tell why, if I had been asked; but I felt unusual horror at the mention of the name—if it was what the French call presentiment, it has since been amply justified.—About three weeks after that time, a person came to our house, with smuggled muslin, tea, taffaty, &c.; and my father, who would rather never buy any thing if he could help it, would yet be easier prevailed upon to buy a bargain of what he did not want at all, than pay a fair market-price for what he did. He happened then to be in one of his best humours; and, bringing the woman into the parlour, and the servant at the same time announcing some male visitor, he left me to make my purchases; and the woman slipped into my hand a letter from Charles;—it was the first respite to months of misery. My heart was laying up in store many repeated readings of his uninterrupted affection; my fancy rambled over years of happiness to come, and hoped for intermediate relief from stratagems like these:—but my ideal happiness was not of long continuance; for, just as I was going to give it a second reading, my father came in, and introduced my fate in the shape of Merisford.—The moment they came in, I foresaw the consequences, at least to a certain degree.—My father's countenance was lit up with expectation; he had discovered that Merisford was a single man, and did not doubt the influence of my charms.—He made me dismiss the

smuggler; and, with a cheerfulness unnatural to him, paid seven or eight pounds for purchases which I never thought of making till after he came into the room. I considered it as postage of my dear Charles's letter; and, had it been as many thousands, should have thought the purchase well made.—My father presented his guest to me as a gentleman who was speedily to become our neighbour; and, having said as much as even his delicacy would permit to achieve the point he laboured—the conversation turned of necessity upon other subjects; for either the brute did not understand the hints that were so plentifully thrown in his way, or I did not happen that day to strike his fancy.—What an escape had I had, if he had always remained as insensible!—My father, however, was resolved not to lose him so easily; he gave him a general invitation to his house; and, after two or three visits, desired him to pay off his lodgings at Mr. Perrin's, and to take a bed with us. This invitation he readily accepted; but I should be guilty of a vanity which misery has long since conquered, if I were to attribute his acquiescence to any feeling he entertained towards me; it saved him a guinea a week; and, notwithstanding his turn for expence in any thing that contributed to make a shew, he would always take any step, however dirty, to save a guinea from the necessaries of life:—he sojourned with us in the family-way for near a fortnight, and never took any more notice of me than he did of the gooseberry-bushes in the garden; but my father and he, from a similarity of sentiment, became the greatest friends imaginable. One morning I came down to breakfast, and found my father alone, when habitually almost I asked, "Where is Mr. Merisford?"—My father put on one of his best looks; and replied, "I am glad to find, Amelia, that you are become sensible of your duty and your interest.—Mr. Merisford is so pleased with you, that he is gone to London, to have a lawyer's advice respecting the mode of settling his new purchase upon you; and to buy you a set of the finest jewels that can be made: so prepare to behave like a dutiful good girl; and when he comes back, you shall be married as soon as you please." "Merciful God! what do you say, Sir!—I marry Mr. Merrisford!—Why, Sir, he has never spoken to me upon the subject; and, if he had, it would be in vain;—I am not mistress of myself." All would have come out;—but, rising from his seat, and stamping with his foot, to the almost destruction of the whole building, "Zounds! madam, he cried, let me have no more of your airs; I will have you drawn upon a hurdle to the church, and he shall marry you in spite of your teeth! A perverse undutiful slut! you have killed your poor mother but you shall not make a fool of your father.—He never spoke to you!—no—I would not let him; because I thought how it would be; but I have engaged to make you marry him, at your peril; let me hear no more of your contradiction."—"But, Sir, hear me."—"No! madam, I will be d—d if I do! I know you are never at a loss for something to say;—but, I am not to be imposed upon: so, do you hear, make me my breakfast; and say no more about it."—I never had been truly unhappy till now—nor knew how doubly miserable my brother's death must make me.—I began to apprehend, that even my declaration of my marriage with Charles, which I considered as binding as a mitre could have made it, would have no effect.—He declared himself resolved not to hear any thing I had to say. I therefore saw no remedy but waiting till Merisford returned, and making the discovery to him: I entertained no great opinion of his delicacy; but I thought an alarm like this must rouse the small sparks of it which every man must possess to distinguish him from his horse. I was mistaken, however. Ten days passed, in which I might have escaped, and certainly should, though to certain beggary; but, relying upon my first thought, which could not have failed to operate upon

a human creature, I sat supinely down; and, I dare say, gave my father an idea that I should make no farther opposition. At last my persecutor came; but so filled was my head and heart with the hopes of finding a refuge in his pride, if not in his humanity, that I received him as my deliverer.—He smirked and smiled; and, taking out of his great-coat pocket a shagreen case, presented me with a very handsome set of jewels; which I put back into his hand, with a smile upon my face, requesting that we might first settle the conditions on which I should accept them. My father frowned, and was going to speak; but he, thinking himself very safe, desired him to let himself speak for once in his life;—and, assuring me that I should command any conditions in reason that was in his power to grant, we sat down to dinner; after which my father went out on pretended business, and left him with

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXIX.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

I WAS now in a situation perhaps the most distressing that human nature knows.—Had the man been of a generous and sympathetic nature, and had loved me, he must have partaken my distress; but, as the matter turned out, I had it all to myself.—He seemed as much at a loss as I was: At last, after much hesitation, and taking his diamond ring off one finger and putting it on another, he began, “Miss Amelia, says he, I did’nt stay an hour in London after your bobs were finish’d, and the parchments, d’ye see, for our wedding.”—“Sir, says I, I am extremely sorry you should have given yourself so much unnecessary trouble about a business which must end as it began.”—“O L—d! replied the beast, it will end I dare say, in a fine boy at the nine months end.”—“Sir, pray do me the favour of a moment’s attention.—Your merit and your fortune will doubtless entitle you to a more deserving wife—I hope it will;—for my part, before I had the pleasure to see you, an inevitable stroke of fate disqualified me for that honour.”—“O, I suppose you’re in love—be you? As for that, why I have been in love myself, before now, d’ye see; but a night’s lodging always cured me.—So—” I was obliged to interrupt him; but did not care to quarrel with him, if I could avoid it; because I found he was my only road to escape by; and, rough and disgusting as it was, I chose rather to travel that road, than be prevented from going the journey at all; for still I did not suppose it possible for even him to be the brute I afterwards found him.—“But, Sir, says I, plain and open dealing is always best: you come recommended to me by my father; and I should be happy to have it in my power to obey him, and marry you; but the fact is—I am already married.”—He started; and I felt the same kind of joy which a tender nurse receives, when a patient shrugging from the blister’s salutary smart gives token of amendment.—The storm at last broke out. “Damn your father! madam, says he, how dare he send me to London on a fool’s errand?”—“Pray, Sir, be patient; my marriage was unknown to him; and, but for this accident, might have long remained so. Nor is there a person now living who was present, except my husband, to discover it.—Even now, I trust to your generosity to shelter me from his anger.”—“How can I shelter you, unless you marry me?”—“Dear Sir, by declining it yourself; you are your own master; and have a right to change your mind: I am sure, you may find reasons enough to support you in such a change. You may have discovered some defects in my conversation, my sentiments, or my temper, now we are left alone; which will amply justify you.”—“As for that there, Miss, says he, I b’ent used to break my word; I have bought and sold wholesale and retail these thirty years; and I never returned a bale of goods, d’ye see, that I had once bought, whatever flaws I might find when I looked them over: if, indeed, any friend told me of their being damaged, why I either made my own terms, or didn’t buy at all.—Now, if you had told me of this here before I went to London and laid out my money, why, mayhap, I might have thought better of it; but, as things are as they are, why I don’t see but I must have the worst end of the staff now, be as it will.—So, there is nobody, by your own account, to tell anything of the matter, except your husband, as you call him, why, I suppose, he

must be some of your father's tenants; and he won't dare to say anything for his own sake; and, for my part, I can't think of being fob'd, d'ye see, after telling every body what a good bargain I had made." I was annihilated: "For heaven's sake! Sir, says I, are you in jest or earnest?" "Look ye, miss, replied the monster, I never jokes about matters of business: so"—At this moment my father entered the room; and, seeing me crying, asked, rather roughly, "What! have you quarreled?"—"Not a bit," say he: "only miss would have persuaded me that I came too late; and that she had been married before to some of your tenants;—but, as I do not find there are any witnesses, d'ye see, I am still willing to take her for better for worse."—"Married! interrupted my father—O, if that is all your come-off, miss, we do not mind it—there is none of my tenants would dare to have married you without my leave, because they know very well that I would turn them and all their generation to starve if they did; besides, it must have been an odd sort of wedding, without any witnesses."—"Mayhap, rejoined Merisford, 'twas without a parson too—then it won't be much in your way."—My heart—but why should I attempt to express its feelings?—made the object of a father's scoff, and held up as the object of contempt and ridicule to a wretch who was willing to take me to his arms as he would a piece of damaged goods into his warehouse; or rather, indeed, a piece of stolen goods; because he flattered himself that the owner was so circumstanced that he dared not demand it!—Indignation kept me silent; and having made a trio of mutes for a quarter of an hour, my father proposed to his companion a game of back-gammon, to decide whether he should be married the next day or the day after. All-powerful Hand, which formedst the human heart, and stamped on all thy creatures the likeness of thyself! pardon the presumption of thy astonished suppliant; and suffer her to ask, why such diversity of minds thou gavest, with bodies all alike! why men should walk, and talk, and move, in one direction, and think so widely different! Blush, pride of reason, pride of human wisdom!—Superior attributes are found in brutes; and the cock-sparrow, who nourishes and shields his little brood from harm, is nearer to divine perfection than my cruel father, who uses the bonds of nature to shackle the free-born mind, and bind his offspring to misery and guilt!—I sat, and this reflection crossed my mind; then, meditating an escape, rose and went to the door; but found he had locked it, and put the key in his pocket.—I was now supremely wretched.—I sat down again; and my father, having won the game, turned about to me, "There, miss, says he, I have got you a day's respite; in the mean time, if you can either point out the parson, or produce the witnesses of your former marriage, why you may extend your freedom as far as you please from Mr. Merisford, and me too."—He was going towards the door; I rose, and threw myself in his way; and, seizing one of his hands, "By all the ties of nature—by my mother's memory—my brother's too—and every feeling of a father's heart, I beg you, Sir, to hear me!—Mr. Merisford has misrepresented my conversation with him."—"Mayhap I lie, madam!"—"You were mistaken in your conjecture. I did not contradict you, because your language was so coarse, and your similes so humiliating, that I did not wish to prolong the conversation."—"What, then, says my father, you are not married, I suppose! Well, well, you shall."—"Sir, I *am* married—Charles Mason is my husband;—my brother was the only witness, and he is dead.—But, oh, thou sacred shade! If thou art conscious of thy sister's sufferings, look down and aid her;—or, if thy merciful Creator will give thee leave, return to save her! Suspend a while the song of grateful praise, and mix with mortals to preserve thy sister and thy friend!—thou know'st our innocence, our

constancy, our love; and seest a father meditate an act to plunge his child into the guilt of infidelity, and both into eternal misery!" Tears choaked my voice; and Merisford, whose soul was inaccessible to pity, asked my father what miss meant? To which he replied: "Oh, Sir, the strolling players have been lately at York;" and then went out, locking the door on

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXX.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

I REMAINED in a state of uninterrupted though painful quietness, for five days following; and, not being able to account for it any other way, or perhaps having the seeds of hope more thickly sown in my composition than any other virtue, I began to flatter myself that they had given up the point, and only confined me by way of punishment for what my father called my obstinacy.—On the Sunday following, my maid, who was the only person allowed to come near me, at her return from church, stunned me with the news of having heard Mr. Merisford's name and mine published, by way of banns; and that my father himself had gone, to be sure it was not neglected; and, perhaps, to see whether any person would object; for they still thought, or affected to think, that I had played the fool (as my father delicately expressed himself) with some young man on the farm.—At dinner, I asked my father if it was true? And whether, if Mr. Merisford could be so base as to marry a woman so circumstanced, he could be so regardless of his own credit as to call such a man his son?—My father said, it was very true; and desired me to keep a civil tongue in my head; for that, if Mr. Merisford had ever so much patience now, I could not suppose but he would remember my sauciness when he had me in his power.—I told him, “That, were that fatal moment ever to arrive, I was not insensible of what I might expect; but that, whilst Charles Mason had life, and I my senses, it was impossible for such an event to happen.” They both laughed; and my father said, “Why, miss, you have not told us who was your parson, nor your guests;—you certainly cannot forget their names:—will you give us an account of your wedding, in the same pretty language of your invocation?” I could not bear his insult; and, not being able to give them a *parson's* name as they desired, nor expecting consideration or belief should I tell the real truth, I only appealed to heaven for the reality of my marriage with Charles; and said, that, as the subject served only for sport, I begged it might be put an end to. Nothing material happened till the Sunday following, when the banns were published again.—I was now not only confined, but watched. I never had accustomed myself to make confidants of servants; and my father knew it; yet suspecting from whom the intelligence of the first publication came, my maid was discharged. Fired with resentment, she went to every neighbour's house, and exposed the treatment I received to the servants; from whom it soon reached the heads of the family. Amongst others, she went to the Parsonage-house; the parson was a very good man, but, fatally for me, a very pedant in his profession, and a slave to all its forms and ceremonies.—His wife too was a very worthy woman, but virtuous by rule, and held a deviation from her ideas as distant from the possibility of mercy, as the papists do all sects but their own.—To them, then, it was a desperate undertaking to unravel my secret, and yet 'twas my only chance.—After the second Sunday's service was over, she came up to my father, and asked him “why Miss Thompson was not at church?”—He told her, “that I was only a little prudish on account of my approaching marriage. She did not admit the excuse; and said, “she would

come and lecture me.”—The proposal struck my father:—“Do so, madam, says he, and try if you can teach her obedience.”—She saw there was something in the way; and curiosity was one of those little imperfections in which she allowed herself.—So in the evening her best embroidered satten was aired; and she sallied forth to hear news, and reprove me for the disobedience of not chusing to have two husbands at once.—My father had prepared me for the visit in the most disagreeable words he could pick out of the dictionary; and about six o’clock she and her pious husband entered.—Merisford was smoking tobacco, an elegance in which my father always indulged him after dinner. The parson had weak lungs, and began to cough and fidget, and at last walked out of the room.—Mrs. Parfect was apprehensive for the bloom of her yellow satten, and expatiated largely on the inconveniences of a smoky-house, and the injuries which the furniture, hangings, and cloaths of the inhabitants, must sustain in consequence.—Mr. Merisford had heard all this with the utmost composure, and marked his inattention by some insignificant shrugs and winks at my father;—but, in some of his violent gesticulations, a spark from his pipe fell upon his leg, when, thundering out a most horrid imprecation, he let fall the pipe, and relieved Mrs. Parfect, who could not help observing how one bad custom produced another.—By this time the parson returned; and, the sash being thrown up to clear the room, we retired into another to drink tea.—There was a visible restraint upon my father and Merisford, in their behaviour towards me.—My father was civil; and Merisford affected a clumsy sort of gallantry, which threw him into a light the most contemptible. At last the parson introduced the horrid subject, by asking “whether it would be agreeable to the parties to be married immediately after service next Sunday, or whether they would chuse to let the church be cleared first?—but that the proposition was rather exceeding his opinion of what was right;—for that all the ceremonies of the church should be duly observed;—and that it was ordained by the primitive fathers, that all marriages should be celebrated in the most public manner, the defect of which, now so prevalent among the great, had brought on many unrighteous consequences;—that, in proportion as the solemnity of the place was dispensed with, the ceremony itself became disregarded and contemned, and all its injunctions slighted.” His wife acquiesced, as indeed she always did, with his opinion; and added, “that she should not have thought herself lawfully married, had a single person departed from the congregation whilst the ceremony was reading.”—After this, I had very little hopes from a communication of my sentimental marriage with Charles—nor did I well know whereabouts to begin;—however, I had no remedy, nor a chance of another appeal.—I was meditating what to say, when my father, whose delicacy never caused conversation to stagnate, with a loud laugh, replied, “Very true, Mrs. Parfect, considered like a woman of sense: pray desire Miss Thompson to give her opinion.”—“Do, my dear, says the good woman, consider the seriousness of the occasion, and then decide whether it ought not to have a serious solemnization?”—I thought this a good opening.—“Madam, I replied, my father refers to a circumstance with which you are unacquainted (she held up her head). It is not to the future, but the past.”—“The past!” interrupted she—“Yes, ma’am, the past.—After the opinion you have expressed, respecting the validity of a marriage resting upon the *place* of its being performed—I have little to no hope from telling you that I was married under yon chestnut-tree—the whole congregation consisting of my husband, my brother, and myself.”—They all looked at each other—and, almost as methodically as soldiers shoulder their musquets, pointed each to their foreheads, and shook their heads.—“I am

not mad, says I, for that your motions signify: but if your presence, Sir, (addressing myself to the parson) can protect me from that insult which I have lately experienced from my own father (I was going to say family), I will explain the matter, however singular it may appear.”—My father began to storm; but the parson claimed his prerogative of keeping peace and good order; and I began.—I recapitulated all the circumstances, as I have already mentioned them to you;—and then, addressing myself to the parson, asked him, “Whether, so circumstanced, I could in conscience think of marrying another man?” The parson paused—and, after some preface, in which ceremony was exalted beyond the very religion it exhibited—he said, “Why really, Miss Thomson, with respect to your conscience, you only can settle matters with that; but your marriage with Mr. Merisford will certainly be lawful, and according to the rules of the church.”—“But, dear Sir, what will become of the terrible injunction, and the punishment, denounced against the party who shall fail to declare any cause or just impediment to a marriage?—Can I remember the occurrences I have just recited, and not declare them?—and what will be the consequences?”—My father was enraged, and turned me into the back-parlour, where he locked me in till supper, and then, in the presence of the minister of the gospel, bad me prepare for the next Sunday, which should join Mr. Merisford to your

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXXI.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in continuation.

FROM that night till the Friday following I never saw my father or my tyrant elect, who, however, spent their time very happily; whilst I was locked in my bed-chamber, and never saw or spoke to a human creature, my father always attending the house-maid to my door, whilst she brought me regularly breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper;—and, seeing that reserve, I took care to keep it up for my own pride-sake, for the interval which was necessarily spent in making my bed, sweeping my room, &c.—On Friday morning, when she came up, I was still in bed, a thing very unusual with me.—She asked me how I did? I said, “Not very well”—and turned on the other side.—At dinner-time she came, and I was still in bed, which she immediately communicated to my father, who instantly entered, and, coming to my bed-side, told me, “that he hoped I was not ill in reality, and that ’twould answer no purpose to pretend it; for that he was so tired of the trouble of being obliged to keep me shut up from ruin, that, notwithstanding Mrs. Parfect’s nonsense about folks being married in churches, if I was not able to go there on Sunday, I should be married at home;—and that Mr. Merisford and he had joined for the expence of a special licence to be prepared, for all my arts!”—I looked up in his face, but made him no answer.—I fancy my countenance shocked him; for, holding out his hand, “Why will you be perverse, Amelia?” says he—“Oh, Sir, I have no argument left to use—dispose of me as you please: the guilt of such a step, as you are going to force me to, fall not on my soul! nor my misery upon yours!”—The servant reminded him that dinner waited, and he left me; but soon after sent me word, that Mr. and Mrs. Parfect, Mr. Merisford, and he, would drink tea with me in my bed-chamber, if I was not able to come down.—I got up, and dressed myself, though my head was so disordered with five days almost incessant tears, that I was frequently obliged to rest.—About six o’clock they came up; and having, as I thought, softened him a little in the morning, I resolved to make one effort more, to escape the horrors of legal prostitution.—Mrs. Parfect took notice that I did not look well; and expressed an opinion that I was too much confined, though she did not suspect it was by force.—I had no mind to enrage my father, and lose the little hold I seemed to have got of his feelings; so I did not let her into the secret, but said, “That I had little enjoyment of any of the innocent amusements of life, since I was so unhappy as not to have it in my power to obey my father in a command he had laid upon me, without sacrificing my future peace and self-approbation.”—He desired that I would say no more upon that subject; and Merisford assuring me that I should change my mind before Monday morning, I let my long-treasured indignation pour upon him at once.—“Mr. Merisford, says I, I have long wished for an opportunity of laying before you, in plain terms, those prospects, which a man, who had either a head or a heart, must have collected from my behaviour ever since your return from London.—Were my hand and heart totally disengaged, you are, of all the creation, perhaps the last man I should chuse to bestow them on.—I dislike your person (he looked in the glass)—but that’s a trifling objection, and might be surmounted.—I disapprove of every sentiment I have ever heard

you breathe.—Our souls would be as ill-matched as our bodies; horror, disgust, detestation, on my part, and consequent resentment and tyranny on your's, would make up the whole sum of our matrimonial treasures;—discord would begin, and discord close the day.—A woman who loved you (if any woman could!) would find it difficult to make a good wife to a man, whose heart knows no gratification in bestowing happiness, and yet vainly flatters himself with receiving it from another.—What sort of a wife then can you expect in me?—If this picture alarms not your insensible soul—add to the group that injured man, who, in the confidence of an heart unlike your own, enjoys the present bliss of knowing me to be his, and the future prospect of a time when I may avow it.”—Here my father interposed, “That’s when I am dead, I suppose Miss, eh?”—“Long may that period be far off, Sir!—release me but from this horrid, impious marriage, and lay upon me what restrictions you please.” Ill as I had been in the morning, this exertion affected me so much, that I fell into violent hystericks, in which, with slight amendment and alternate intervals, I continued till Sunday at four o’clock, when my discarded maid, who was now allowed to see me, made clear to me a horrid truth, which I faintly guessed at. They had taken advantage of some of those moments when speech just anticipates sense, and joined me to Merisford and misery.—I raved and tore my hair, made several attempts, dictated by desperation, to take away my life;—but I was carefully watched, and cruelly preserved to misery.—On the Tuesday morning I was put into a carriage, and, almost senseless, left my father’s house, and arrived the third day at lodgings, which were provided in New Bond Street for our reception —There we staid about three weeks, in the course of which time I had, by his direction, found out and fixed upon a house in Berkeley Square, which he ordered to be fitted up to my taste, without setting any limits to the expence of the plan I might adopt.—So many blackening circumstances, as I have been obliged to mention, in drawing his character, and exculpating myself; I should be as unjust as he was inhuman, if I did not give every favourable tint a place in the painting.—He carried me about to see the town, and doffed as much as possible the brutality of his nature.—We got into our house, hired servants, and began housekeeping, with as much tranquillity as the situation permitted;—but soon new matter of anxiety arose.—He considered servants as slaves, and treated them accordingly—the consequence was eternal changing.—Expences, and those of the most ungrateful kind, were hourly accumulating.—Changing of servants superinduced altering of liveries; discharging of coachmen was attended with neglect of the horses, illness followed, and then we lost them;—one horse dying, the other was perhaps necessarily sold, to buy a pair alike to draw in the carriage.—Frequently one of those would be disordered, or the carriage out of repair, and then a job was to be hired.—In short, his ill-judged mode of being an œconomist had consequences more disgraceful, and full as expensive, as his being extravagant.—This I could not help taking notice of. He was obstinate; I did not love him well enough to give up a point in which my judgement supported me.—We disputed, quarreled; and not seldom the most brutal manual resentment fell on me.—If we saw company, he was peevish at the expence; if not, he was miserable from being alone:—whole hours between tea and supper have past, and we never exchanged a word.—He had no taste for public amusements; and I had no female acquaintance whom I chose to accompany me.—At last, feeling the want of something, and thinking ’twas society, he proposed to me the expedient of taking some young person well brought up as a kind of companion.—In the house in Bond-street where we had temporary lodgings, a captain

upon half-pay, with a wife, three daughters, and a little boy, occupied the second floor.— With the eldest of these I commenced an intimacy, and frequently asked her to my house; and, when he so far relaxed from one of his fits of brutality as to make the above proposal, I wrote to her; and, asking her mother's permission, fixed upon her for the companion of my most tolerable hours. A whole winter passed in this manner, during which time I never saw nor heard of Charles; and, to the best of my power, avoided even bestowing a thought upon a subject so forbidden. Early in the spring I went with my young friend to Ranelagh, where the first object I beheld was he.—I had three days before taken possession of a small independence, by the death of my father; and resolved to avail myself of his assistance to escape from a life of sin and misery, to this happy retirement, which I long had meditated. The means I made use of, and the consequent occurrences, introduced to you—

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXXII.

MRS. MERISFORD TO MRS. CLEMENT,

in conclusion.

IF it be possible that your patience has been equal to the journey I have prepared for it through the preceding pages, I hope that, as I have not endeavoured to soften or to conceal an action of my unfortunate life, nor even a secret wish by which they were excited, due allowance will be made for the weakness of the human heart, unaided by experience, and deprived of its best support in the loss of my excellent mother.—If I am acquitted by you and my uncle Charles, the happiness of my future moments will be complete. I have now no hopes, no fears, no prospects, no anxieties;—but, excluded from the converse of the interested and the artificial, I enjoy with decent comfort the present hour, nor dread the last; but look with cheerful hope to the day that closes my account, and lays me peaceful in the reconciling grave, where all persecutions cease.—I have not taken notice of any occurrence later than that of my first escape, and meeting my uncle at Charles's chambers: my being at your house, and the treatment I there received from Mr. Merisford, you probably remember; I will not therefore repeat it, as, though I think the most minute truths essential to a history (for small things have their influence as well as great), I have an abhorrence of repetitions, and can scarcely allow even veracity to be a full compensation for avoidable length.—You recollect, no doubt, that, whilst you were below with my uncle, I was forced from your house.—At the corner of the street he put me into a hackney-coach, and ordered the man to drive home.—When we arrived, the young lady who had escaped with me met me at the door, and, throwing herself on her knees, confessed, that, alarmed by the situation my uncle's presence had thrown me into, she had returned, and informed Mr. Merisford where she had left me.—He had, it seems, an appointment in the city, which he was obliged to attend; and, relying upon my return, he had no thought of going to seek me, till my uncle's letter arrived, which, enraged by a spirit of the most malignant revenge, he sent to the unhappy young man, who, mad with disappointment (though he had nothing in view but my rescue), and made desperate by the prospect of saving me being cut off by my uncle's interference, sent him a challenge, and, having wounded him (as he thought) fatally, was thrown by remorse on the point of his own sword, and died upon the spot.—The recollection is too painful.—Accept, dear youth, a tributary tear; and let my life of penance, for an involuntary desertion of thy love, entitle me to share in those regions of unmixed delights, where parents can't command, nor children suffer slavery!—The first moments of reproach and resentment being over, he asked what other scheme I had to propose,—told me that Miss Barnes was so shocked at my want of affection for a husband who deserved better at my hands, that she could not reconcile it to herself to assist me any farther; but was disposed, he believed, if matters could be accommodated, to make him some reparation for my cruelty; and, as I had often expressed a wish for a separate apartment, that I might now take her's, and leave my part of his bed for a more deserving woman to occupy.—I told him, “that if Miss Barnes could reconcile it to herself to take my place as partner of his bed and mistress of his house, she had my consent;—that, if there was any form of law,

by which I could yield up my pretension to him and them, I would most cheerfully embrace the opportunity;—that, miserable as he had made me, I should rejoice to bestow happiness in return, provided I could do it in the person of another woman;—and that, if he would permit me to follow the course which he had with so much exposition and bloodshed interrupted, that of sheltering myself and my sorrows in this convent, he had my approbation of any scheme he could pursue, which could be productive of equal happiness to him.”—He stared at my acquiescence; and she, being called into the parlour, with some hesitation said, “That as I had such an insuperable dislike to Mr. Merisford, and that our marriage, from the preceding one with Mason, was so doubtful, that she should think he was at liberty to marry again;—at least, that his marriage with her, must be as valid as mine with him.” The arguments were specious and plausible, but not quite convictive. However, my heart forbade me to oppose them; and, having only requested that matters might remain in their present state till I left the house, and then advised them to refer the disquisition of all their doubts to her parents, and some lawyer capable of assisting them; I entered with a lightened heart upon the subject of my transportation hither.—He offered to make any small addition to what my father’s bequest produced, to maintain me in the upper class of residents here; but, as obligation to a person I can’t esteem would be the greatest grievance that fate could inflict upon me, I civilly refused it; and, having received his assurance of a conveyance in the first ship that sailed for this port, we parted upon the best terms imaginable; and for the first time in my life I found and acknowledged myself obliged to him.—In about two days after a ship sailed, in which I took my passage; and, having previously agreed upon the conditions, by means of a lady, a near relation, who is of the sisterhood, I entered immediately, and have for seven months enjoyed that tranquillity and peace which my younger days were deprived of, by the sufferings of my dear mother, and my own consequent distresses, all arising from the same source, the native cruelty of my father.—I often dream of the dear unhappy partner of my heart, and almost hope that he is yet alive.—But morning comes, with reason and reflection in her train, and dissipates all these fairy prospects of felicity.—I have had a letter from a servant, whose attachment to me was so strong, that she begged I would suffer her to attend me here, to return at her own expence.—I could not refuse a request that flattered me, though it would have been inconsistent with my feelings to let her suffer by it. She tells me that Miss Barnes is now Mrs. Merisford, and that she hears they live very happily. Long may they do so!—But why should my subsequent ruin have been a necessary ingredient!—Unsearchable are the ways of Providence! and its decrees past finding out!—I dread to begin a conversation, whether actual or mental, upon this subject: it leads to such reflections, as almost stagger faith;—but, finite as we are in our capacities, ’tis not less weak than impious, to attempt to scan the works of Him, whose infinite and boundless attributes must be softened by an interposing veil, to be viewed by mortals—and even then they are glanced at, not seen.—We have indulgences here that I did not expect in a convent; but, actuated as we are by a religion, whose dictates are virtue, not austerity, and whose great master and founder has confirmed his precepts by his own example, we fear nothing but vice; we enjoy all the cheerfulness which innocence gives, and know that to be good, is to be happy.—If, in your next embassy to this part of the world, you will send me a few volumes of amusement, I shall be much obliged; I need not point out to you the kind.—Your own understanding and virtuous disposition will be sufficient guides in the choice;—what you

approve, we shall:—for pure unaffected virtue is of all countries, all climates, all sexes, all religions;—and what is virtue within these sacred walls, is virtue in you, whether in the closet, the church, or the world at large. Present my duty to my uncle, my blessing to your little ones; and accept with this artless picture of myself, drawn purely by Nature's rules, the esteem, the attention, and the ever-lasting gratitude of, dear madam, your sequestered niece,

AMELIA.

L E T T E R LXXXIII.

MRS. CLEMENT TO MRS. BELLAS.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I Enclose you to-day the conclusion of Amelia's hapless story. I don't know that ever I was more pleased with any thing I either read or heard;—for I own myself a disciple of the sober lady Grace in one point at least; and admire Nature, let her dress be never so homely.—Mr. Clement read some of the letters with as much avidity, as a love-sick girl of fifteen does a new novel, when she hopes to find a precedent for the first act of folly she commits, and even expects a pattern for the rope-ladder by which she meditates an escape.—For the last week he has been uncommonly busy in the compting-house; and, but for the chearfulness he keeps up in his countenance and manner, I should be apprehensive that something went wrong; but, when I spoke to him this morning at breakfast, he chid me for my folly, and told me, “that if our shipwrights in the dock-yards were as industrious in preparing the fleet, as I was in manufacturing distress, we should be in good condition next spring to meet and decide the fate of the Americans.”—You know he is a great politician; and he had, as I afterwards found, been reading some letters of private intelligence respecting our present unhappy war in America, which gave his countenance the gloom which had alarmed me.—I think politics sit mighty ill upon a woman; so I gave up the point directly, though I cannot say but I sometimes heave a melancholy sigh, for the dreadful and unnatural conflict of brother against brother armed, and parent against children!—However, if we consider the matter in a more enlarged view, all wars are liable to the same objections; for are we not all brothers—children of the same common Parent, and subjects of the same Prince—even the Prince of Peace?—Patriots and wise men may say what they please; but, as an individual of that sex whose valour is not in the list of their virtues, I often think it wonderful that a Sovereign like ours, whose virtues even his enemies confess, should have a single subject who can be base enough to lift his arm against him. I do not understand the question; nor will attempt to decide whether it was worth the Americans contending, at the expence of so much blood and treasure, what particular mode of taxation should be adopted. But this I think, that, had they reasoned with moderation, and a reference to the character of the Prince they oppose; they would have acted more consistently with wisdom and true policy, to have trusted, with the confidence of well-treated sons, in a parent's dispensations towards them.—Why should they suppose, that a man whose heart is kept alive to all the finest feelings of humanity, by the daily, the hourly exertions of it toward a numerous offspring of his own, (a mark, a singular one, of Heaven's protection!) should treat with rigour his adopted children; or pull up by the roots those growing shrubs which flourished happily and contentedly under his royal shade? It was not nature's voice, nor God's;—it was the voice of faction, the subtle schemes of a designing few, to ruin millions for their partial interests, and plunge two nations in blood and horror, that they might smile in dear-bought security;—that they might gratify ambition, avarice, or revenge, with the lives, the properties, and the fame of the deluded multitudes, who daily fall sacrifices to their artifice, and manure with their blood those fields from which they expect a bounteous

harvest.—Pardon this effusion, ye lords of the creation!—the effusion of an heart loyal to my King, GRATEFUL to my Queen, and which, had it inhabited a masculine bosom, would freely spend its dearest drops in their defence, and that of their royal offspring;—but, as it is, with woman's weapons, pious wishes and zealous prayers, will aid their cause; and, having lived to see their misguided children return to the obedience which they have deserted, and received to that pardon and affection which, properly sought, they will be sure to find, I shall die content.

Forgive me, Charlotte, this political excursion; it was inspiration to thy

MARIANNE.

T H E E N D.