

VICISSITUDES
IN
GENTEEL LIFE.

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IN

GENTEEL LIFE

In FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

Bear with me now, I have a timid Mind: but if you will encourage my first Shoots, my future Aim shall be to give you Pleasure.

TUDOR.

STAFFORD:

PRINTED BY ARTHUR MORGAN.

AND SOLD BY

T.N. LONGMAN,

PATER-NOSTER-RROW, LONDON.

M. DCC. XCIV.

VICCISITUDES

IN

GENTEEL LIFE.

VOL. III.

LETTER, I.

LADY STANLEY, TO MISS STANLEY.

Alverston, March 24th.

YOUR letter, my dearest Emma, dated the twenty-second, I have now received, and the contents strengthen an apprehension which has, for some days past, greatly disturbed me. Your father is no less uneasy than I am; but I will lead you progressively to the cause of our disquiet.

It is unnecessary to descant upon the impetuosity of your brother's disposition. We all know it well; and I must needs say that, in so young a man, I have thought it no unfavourable prognostic: however, experience has taught me that it is to be deplored.

About eight days back, Mrs. Butler; Mrs. Willett; Mrs. Raymond, and Miss Parker, made me a morning-visit. George was present; and the conversation almost immediately turned upon the partiality with which he was honored by Lady Lucinda Harrington; whom, he says, he never saw but once; and that was at Huntingdon, three years back, when Sir Charles Conway and he were coming from Newmarket races. However, from her conduct at Mortimer Lodge, at Mrs. Manwairing's wedding, and from some other circumstances, which I have no spirits now to give minutely, it appeared no less true than strange, that he was distinguished by her favourable opinion.

After the ladies were gone, your brother was unusually silent, and seemed very thoughtful. I enquired the cause, when, with his natural candour, he informed me that he could not help being more impressed by what he termed the prating of the gossips who had just left us, than, perhaps, he ought to be; and then showed me a little vellum case which he found at the Lodge, and which, he was then assured, was dropped by the young lady of whom they had been talking. I must own I was exceedingly surprised when he opened, and drew from the recess, the most elegant performance I ever saw done in crayons. It was a portrait of himself; and so extremely like, that I gazed at it with increasing surprise. At the back of the picture were a few lines of poetry which demonstrated the equal excellency of the head and heart of the performer, who, beyond doubt, appeared to be Lady Lucinda Harrington; but the circumstances which gave the

confirmation are, as I said, too numerous and particular for my present relation. George immediately declared his resolution to follow her to Bristol. I opposed his sudden determination; yet when he asked for my reasons, I could not give any one he thought material; therefore told him I would lay the whole before his father; which I did; and though we both wished him to postpone the matter for a short time, we were at length prevailed upon by his importunity to consent to his going to Bristol, and thinking (as no objection could be offered to circumstances) that he would, upon seeing the lady, be able to judge how to proceed. Sir Edward empowered him to make generous proposals with respect to her fortune. This happened on the Tuesday, just after I had sent off to you my letter of that day, and I should immediately have written again, but your brother promised you should hear from him within two days.

The morning after he left Alverston, I went, as soon as breakfast was over, into my dressing-room, and requested my amiable companion, who encroached hourly upon my affection, to alter a cap I had just received from Derby, and finding, upon falling into chat, that she knew many young ladies of fashion about town, I asked if she had ever seen Lady Lucinda Harrington. Her affirmative produced other enquiries, to which her replies considerably perplexed me; as the substance of them, though delivered in rather softer language, was nearly equal to the opinion you gave, of the lady above-mentioned, in your letter dated Sunday.

I immediately told Sir Edward of what Maria, with much unwillingness, had informed me; he was concerned; but as we thought it would only be a simple disappointment to your brother, we did not disturb ourselves much about it; and, indeed, rather hoped it might be of some advantage to him, by giving a little check to his impetuous manner of proceeding. However, when his letter, dated Stratford, reached us, we were considerably uneasy, as he informed us of his having actually entered into engagements with Sir Philip Glynn, whom he accidentally met with at Coventry; and requested Sir Edward would write a letter to that gentleman, giving a formal ratification of the proposals. What now to do we knew not. It was possible George had intimated to Sir Philip that he would soon have a letter from his father; therefore hoping Maria (who it was not to be supposed was personally acquainted with Lady Lucinda) had imbibed her character from the representation of prejudice, he wrote to that gentleman as your brother desired, and told him he left every thing to be settled by the discretion of himself and his son; after which, we remained tolerably satisfied till the arrival of your letter this morning. I will not, my love, say how much we are distressed by your account, which so exactly tallies with that of Maria's. However, as nothing can be done, we have only to endeavour to wait, with patience, the issue of the event: for in the present situation of circumstances, it would be highly improper to interfere, as we know not how far the native impetuosity of your brother's temper, aided by the *extraordinary* ready concurrence of Sir Philip, may have carried matters. Before any caution could reach him, he may have so fettered himself as to make it unavailing; and if so, probably it would be productive of serious mischief. Besides, what caution can be necessary for a young man so capable of judging, as George is; whose eyes are perfectly open; he not being under that fascinating illusion of passion, miscalled affection, which often fatally blinds the understanding!

After much consultation, therefore, we concluded that if Lady Lucinda Harrington deserved the character which has been given of her, George would soon see she was not the woman to make him happy; if she did *not* deserve it—[you likewise had it from report] it would be cruel, as well as unjust, to insinuate a derogatory idea. Not, my Emma, as I before said, that either your father or myself approved your brother's hasty measures upon a matter so important. Yet, when he left Alverston, his plan did not seem *very* reprehensible, as he meant only to *see* a lady, of whom fame, in this part of the country, spoke approvingly; of whose favourable sentiments for himself he had received very strong presumptive proofs, and who, as to family and fortune, was surely unobjectionable.

Wishing, therefore, as we earnestly do, to see him married—we were willing to hope his pursuit (from which, indeed, it would have been hard to have diverted him, without being more peremptory than we think we ought to be with such children as ours) might produce, with happiness, that desired event: And had he not met with Sir Philip Glynn, the disappointment of finding the young lady other than he expected, would not have been of any consequence, or *if* of any, perhaps, as I observed, of a good one, in correcting his precipitance in future.

Just after your father had written to the baronet, an account was brought of poor Mr. Fowler's death, which made a letter to your brother immediately necessary. Sir Edward having, as you know, given to him the power of supplying the vacancy; and before he went from home, he informed us of his having promised the benefice to Mr. Evelyn, the gentleman who, I told you, accompanies Sir Charles Conway in his tour.

From the foregoing considerations, no subject was touched upon in this letter to George, except that which occasioned its being written; but he was desired to let us hear from him immediately. That we impatiently expect his reply I need not affirm.

And now, my love, for *another* subject of an unpleasing kind.—My amiable—my truly admirable, and really beloved Maria, has left Alverston! She went this morning; and I cannot express my concern at her absence. Your father feels it almost as much as I do; for he says she is one of the most interesting—one of the most bewitching characters he ever met with. She was, indeed, to us, almost as another daughter. I cannot express how she has stolen upon us since your departure. Her merits seemed to increase every hour.

One day last week Sir Edward said he would walk as far as the Lilly-copse; and it being exceedingly pleasant, I set out, about half an hour after he went, with an intent to meet him upon his return in the long meadow; but your father seeing old Walden as he passed the lodge, and hearing from him that the carpenters wanted him at the dairy-house, he crossed over to them, and after directing them how to proceed (finding himself a little tired) came straight home, with a design of asking me to take a ride with him in the chaise, and, it seems, entered the lesser hall just as I left the garden. When he opened the door of the saloon he heard the organ, and concluding I was playing upon it, hastened to the library, when thinking the music was unusually fine, he stopped a moment at the

door, being unwilling to interrupt me; and was more and more struck with the harmony of the sounds, which were, to use his own words, so wildly sweet, that he was convinced what he heard was a true voluntary. As this was the kind of music I, when young, most delighted in, your father fancied I was endeavouring to recover past ideas in the science; yet confessed, though he used to be partial to my finger, that he listened with surprise, as he never remembered to have heard me play so well before. After he had stood at the door a few minutes, the music ceased, and he was going into the room, but it immediately began again, and, at the same time, his ears were arrested by tones from a voice which seemed harmony itself. For a moment, he said, he fancied his Emma was returned; but recollecting the improbability of that, he stepped into the little study, and putting aside the curtain of the glass door which opens into the library, he thought he saw, in the person of Maria Birtles, an angel's form sitting before the organ. Never in his life, as he affirms, was he so stricken with amazement. Her attitude—her manner of playing, was beyond all description. He was rivetted to the spot; but she sat not long; for starting up suddenly, she hastened away, as if she apprehended somebody's over-hearing her; for which reason, as we afterwards conjectured, she played in the softest diapason stop. As you may suppose, this incident was more than once the subject of our conversation; which, as often as it occurred, was always concluded with a declaration from us both, that Maria Birtles, take her person and mind, stood in the foremost rank of British females: I have much more to say about her, but must defer it till I see you, and hasten to tell you of her leaving us. Yesterday morning Jonathan brought letters from Derby; amongst which, was one directed to Maria. I took it and carried it to her. She retired to read it, and did not return sooner than in a quarter of an hour. At length she came to me with tears starting from her eyes, and with the beautiful rose in her cheeks much heightened.

"My dear madam," said she, sighing very deeply, "I must leave you; at least, for a time. But how can I express my regret?"

I was as if thunder-struck. Indeed I was greatly affected; but I cannot enter upon the ensuing scene which insensibly grew to be exceedingly tender. The occasion of her going was to see her father, from whom she has been some time absent. What his determination would be, respecting her situation in future, she did not know. The letter which summoned her to London was written by a female friend of hers, whose name is Thompson. She shewed it to me. The anxiety of her father to see her was feelingly described; yet there were some expressions of resentment against him for his past unkindness to such a daughter—was the expression—as never man before was blest with. Mrs. Thompson then urged her hastening up, and condoled with her on the pain she would feel at leaving a family so congenial with herself; and, in a very obliging manner, mentioned every one of us with particularity. She then informed her of the almost sudden death of poor Mrs. Douglas, who, as you, probably, saw in the newspapers, had been to Weymouth, in hope of receiving benefit from the sea.

When I had finished reading the letter, I lamented, in very warm and sincere terms, the necessity there was for her leaving me, by which the dear amiable girl was so penetrated that she burst into tears, being unable, as she said, to express her sensations. She then spoke of you in the most grateful and affectionate terms. But as I cannot do

justice to her sentiments, and as the recapitulation of the scene really distresses me, I will postpone any farther account of it till I can give you a verbal one. Suffice it, that Sir Edward, as well as myself, sincerely regret Maria's departure from Alverston. She went about nine o'clock, leaving an earnest request that she might be remembered to you in the warmest expressions which gratitude and friendship—if she might be allowed the familiar term—could dictate; promising to write to me as soon as she reached London. At parting I pressed her to receive a small bank note, but she so earnestly entreated permission to decline the acceptance, that, struck with the dignity of her manner, I involuntarily withdrew my hand, and was near asking pardon, with a courtesy, for the tender.

What an extraordinary young creature this is! I think, my Emma, warmly as you admired her, you saw not half her merits; for they continually expanded till the last moment. I am impatient for her promised letter, that I may write a repetition of the pressing invitation I gave her to return to us *as a visitor*, as soon as her father would consent to spare her.

And now, my dear girl, will you forgive your mother for having a thought to interrupt your happy scenes at Woodstock? Indeed, my child, I wish for your return. I feel a vacancy for which I know not how to account. Sir Edward is rather unwell, and my poor Moore will probably soon quit this lower world.

If Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Eleanor *could* spare my *two* girls—and if Mrs. Stanhope would trust the amiable Maria to my maternal care for a limited time—I think I should soon be better. But I will not enforce this request, lest the compliance should be destructive to some agreeable plan: only, my dear, come as soon as your leaving Woodstock can be made quite easy to your friends in that place, and to yourself; but I charge you not to hasten improperly. If you do, I shall, indeed, be displeased. You know me so well that I need not say any more upon this subject.

Your father sends his tenderest love to his girl; and his cordial respects to all her friends in Oxfordshire, to which she will unite and dispense those of her other ever affectionate parent,

HENRIETTA STANLEY.

LETTER, II.

MR. STANLEY, TO SIR CHARLES CONWAY.

Bristol, March 25th.

I Have this instant, my dear Conway, received a letter from my father on the subject of poor Fowler's death. He went off, at last, rather suddenly; if that can be said of a man who has been lingering several weeks.

Mr. Evelyn is now Rector of Alverston. Give my compliments to him, and request him to oblige me, by omitting the acknowledgments customary upon these occasions. In short—tell him I will not receive any letter from him upon the subject.

But can you spare him? Can you allow of his going, for a few days, immediately to Alverston? My father wishes to see him there. You know he is rather particular about these matters. It is his desire that Mr. Evelyn may be inducted, and every relative to the business settled, as soon as possible.

I forbear writing to him because I will not have his answer.

And now—Why do not I hear from you? Yet, upon consideration, I believe no letter of yours, sent since you knew my address, could have reached me. I forgot, when I wrote from Stratford, to ask you to direct to the Bristol post-office; but it might be thought you would have supposed that to have been sufficient.

Excuse me, Charles. I am confoundedly ill-humoured, and know not when I shall be any better.

Lady Lucinda has received a pressing request from a Mrs. Bellmin at Bath, that she would oblige Miss Horton, her niece, who is very much indisposed, with a visit. These ladies, I find, do not bear the brightest of characters, and Lady Glynn does not much wish my dulcinea to comply. But she claims Sir Philip's promise, given her two or three days back, that she shall now be permitted to see this friend, which, it seems, she has long desired, as she professes to be extremely fond of her. Another blessed proof of her wisdom and prudence! She goes, I fancy, this afternoon. I am, doubtless, to escort her; though I think I could welcome a broken limb for affording me an excuse for non-attendance.

Once more—A curse upon my stupid folly! And a curse, indeed, is likely to be its effect. O Charles! Charles! I envy you on the subject of your late distresses. You had the great consolation of not deserving what you endured. While I—

But adieu. I shall run distracted.

GEORGE STANLEY.

LETTER, III.

COLONEL GREVILLE, TO THE HONORABLE
MRS. DIGBY.

Pall-Mall, March 25th.

YOUR letter is before me. I have read every line with admiration, and feel myself a man of encreased consequence every time I reflect on the nearness of our relationship. But, Arabella, be piteous. Spare the divine his heart. By all accounts he is an honest fellow. Let the conquest of your baronet—which, I think, you cannot fail of compleating—entirely satisfy you; at least at *present*. When you are Lady Conway—no advance, by the bye, to the Honorable Mrs. Digby—I believe I shall be tempted to veil my remembrance of our consanguinity, and inlist myself in the number of your dying swains; and if you should find yourself inclined to be a little grateful—it will only, you know, be in a family way.

"Think of this, my sweet cuz. Think of this."

And now for myself—I have a very pretty plan just going to be brought into practice. When I last wrote, I had it in agitation, but since that time, I have considerably improved upon it; which improvement makes it necessary for me to go to Alverston immediately. But I know you have curiosity in no small degree; therefore, *in expectation of some future reward*, I will e'en indulge you, contrary to my intention, with a few hints of my design.

Lord Fitzmurray—that tool of intrigue—has, you know, a castle upon the borders of South Wales. To that my fair Emma is to be conveyed, without waiting for her consent, which I doubt it would be somewhat hard to obtain. I was to have assisted in person, though in masquerade, at the seizure of this capital prize; but Fitzmurray has undertaken the whole of that part of the business, and as he wishes to be somewhat more than an agent, Miss Lawson, for his amusement, is to accompany my charmer in her expedition. Previous to this, I go to Alverston; not *merely* to ingratiate myself with the old people—the young one, which gave birth to this point in my plan, Captain Jones (in a letter to Jack Brampton) says is at Bristol—but to evince *I could not have any hand in the rape*. As soon as the girls are taken, the Lawsons will, doubtless, dispatch messengers all over the kingdom; certainly one to Alverston: but not to trust entirely to their sending, I have given Lord Fitzmurray a letter, without a signature, to put into the post-office, upon his going off, (directed to George Stanley, Esq. *or in his absence to any other of the family*) to give the alarm. I, you will remember, am there at the time, and instantly, with my trusty valet, fly in search of the ravished fair ones; and, "*by the luckiest chance in the world,*" discover the route they were carried; — pursue, find, and rescue them from the hands of the villains who had unlawfully seized them.

How I shall proceed, depends upon the grateful or *un-grateful* behaviour of my Venus. If she be softened to compliance, I will carry her back in safety: if not, she must take, and thank herself for, the ensuing consequence. *I will*, to pay myself for my trouble, prevent her ever being any other than Emma Stanley or Mrs. Greville, though I then abscond the kingdom.

A few particulars remain to be settled, which I doubt not of making easy, and *then*—for Alverston.

But I have quarrelled with, and dispatched, my girl of convenience. Polly Fenton—alias Matilda Barlowe—no longer belongs to me. She grew very expensive, and was unfaithful. In words of truth—her face was *amazingly* familiar to me: and she had so long obliged me, that to oblige longer, was not in her power. I, therefore, this morning sent her a gallant; then went and discovered them together; abused her, and packed her off; allowing her but three hours to collect and box up her trumpery.

Her rooms, furnished in style, are now tenantless, and will probably remain so till the remembrance of Emma Stanley (for she must, in the end, comply) shall be lost in Mrs. Greville.

There, cuz: there is multum in parvo for you, in return.

Fitzmurray gives me an account of the arrangements he has made towards perfecting our project, and bids me expect his being in town on Sunday; therefore, *to give proofs of my innocence*, I intend going to Alverston on Monday, as on Thursday or Friday, or Saturday—as opportunity serves—he will attempt the glorious seizure. If Miss Lawson, he says, be one of *his* beauties, she shall for life be mistress of the castle. But I doubt she would hold her sovereignty by a very frail tenure.

Suppose you give a hint to Sir Charles, through the medium of the parson, that I have made proposals to the Stanleys, *and have been accepted!* I shall gently intimate that, by means of your meeting at Yarmouth with the baronet, I shall probably have the honor of, very soon, ranking him amongst my kinsmen.

It is a lucky thought. Improve upon it to our mutual benefit.

As I go down into Derbyshire, I think I shall call upon Miss Howard, and *congratulate* her upon the death of *her dear friend* Mrs. Egerton.

And now sweet cuz! farewell.

With *profound respect*—
perfect admiration, &c. &c. &c.
yours,
ARCHIBALD GREVILLE.

LETTER, IV.

MAJOR CARRINGTON, TO MRS. LAWSON.

London, March 25th.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR counsellor authorises me to tell you, that you are perfectly right in all you have asserted, and have offered such very fair proposals as cannot but be accepted if Hawkins retains his perfect understanding; and he doubts not but that he shall be able to conclude every thing to your satisfaction, before the end of next term.

I heartily congratulate you on this probability.

Your affair too with Lord Danvers may now be finally adjusted, and that personally, as his lordship means very soon to visit his cottage. Since my last letter to you on that subject, a great revolution has happened in the earl's family. Sir William Jennyns is out of town, therefore I have not heard minute particulars; but the substance is, that Lady Caroline Pemberton, and Mr. and Mrs. Maynard, are all returned to England; that through Mr. Maynard's interposition, the earl is reconciled to his next to divine daughter, and that he received her with transport, without one reproach. It is however whispered about, that she has dearly earned this affectionate treatment, by giving up her right in the jointured estate, and thereby rendering herself entirely pennyless, except his lordship has gratitude sufficient to induce him to determine upon laying by a yearly sum for her future support. His engagement with Lord Crumpford is entirely broken, to the furious displeasure of that *ig*-nobleman, who talks of suing the earl for non-performance of articles. If this matter *should* be brought forward, I fancy the agreement will not redound much to the honor of either of the titled gentlemen: but Mr. Maynard's superiority of management will, most likely, put a stop to such kind of proceedings. That gentleman and his lady are, I believe, to accompany the earl and his daughter to the Woodstock cottage—as his lordship chuses to have it called.

You expressed yourself so well pleased with my former account of these personages, and seemed to take so much interest in the fate of Lady Caroline, that I imagined I could not more entertain you than by giving the above particulars.

I beg you will remember me with respect to Mrs. Eleanor and Miss Lawson. Miss Rachel I saw last week. I fancied she looked rather pale and thin. Perhaps the London air does not agree with her constitution. She said, however, she was as well as usual.

Miss Ellison lately requested me to convey (when I should write again) her compliments to all my cousins at Woodstock; with the execution of which commission I subscribe myself, my dear madam,

your obliged, and affectionate friend,
JOHN CARRINGTON.

LETTER, V.

MR. BROOMLEY, TO AUGUSTUS MAYNARD, ESQ.

March 25th, 1789.

SIR,

HAVING had the honor of being once or twice in your company in Edinburgh, and knowing still more of you from character, my judgment points you out as the person proper to be made acquainted with an affair of considerable consequence to the noble house from whence you sprang, and to which you are otherwise allied.

Without more preface, I will submit my story to your consideration.

I am the vicar of a little village called Kildwick, near Skipton in Yorkshire, where I have lived from my infancy. It would be vanity to suppose myself remembered by name; but when I mention the circumstance of Captain Hubbard's offending Mr. Macdonald at the last Edinburgh election, possibly you may recollect the person who took the liberty to give him a severe reprimand.

A few years back, a lady, apparently of middle age, came and hired a genteel house in my parish, bringing with her a boy about eight or ten years old. Her name, Pemberton; the youth was her son, and, as I soon found, the incontestible heir to the title and estate of Danvers. It has always been my wish to gain such information respecting any new comers into my parish, as would enable me to converse with them for both their profit and pleasure, where they were not incompatible with each other; as experience has taught me is too often the case.

Think not, sir, that I am boasting of conduct which is but a bare performance of duty. I only mean to elucidate a motive (which might else be termed curiosity) for enquiring into the characters and connexions of those who become my parishioners. A man, verging upon fourscore, can hardly fail of being too well convinced that all beneath the sky is vanity, to indulge any principle of it in himself.

Mrs. Pemberton (to which you cannot be a stranger) had formerly wanted either the benefit of good advice, or the resolution to follow it. By her retiring to this part of the country, I had hope that she sincerely wished to obliterate the remembrance of her former conduct, and I made it my endeavour to facilitate that design. Her *behaviour* was not reprehensible, though her conversation was, sometimes, rather more airy than became the character she seemed desirous to establish; for which reason I was rather cautious in permitting my darling grand-daughter Alethea (left to my care by an only and beloved son; her mother dying at her birth) to be often in her company, except when I was present; and I wished to have the boy, who was lively; promising, and might, I thought, after I had left the world, be of some consequence to the nation, as little with his mother

as he could be with propriety; for which reason, though I could not well afford it, I boarded him at my house upon low terms; telling her that his future probable situation required all possible care should be taken in his education, and that I wished her to send him to Edinburgh as soon as his age permitted. She listened pretty attentively to what I said, and always seemed desirous he should be well instructed; but from time to time requested his continuing with me till his age far exceeded that of the youths I wished (for the sake of accumulating some trifle for my girl) to have under my tuition. However, I last summer insisted upon his being removed, as I did not think myself capable of being of service to him any longer. She therefore carried him to Edinburgh, and placed him with Mr. Blythe, of whose abilities I had some knowledge.

About last Michaelmas she received a letter directed with speed, informing her that Master Pemberton had been thrown from a horse; that his skull was fractured, and his death apprehended. This intelligence almost distracted her; not, as I have often thought, from any great degree of affection for her child, but from apprehension of the abolition of her future prospects, of which she used to be continually talking, and seemed greatly to enjoy, in idea; not doubting but her son, when Earl of Danvers, would settle her in splendor; and indeed, from the youth's noble disposition, she formed but probable conclusions.

I am thus particular, sir, because I wish to give you an idea of the woman you are to manage.

Mrs. Pemberton immediately set off for Edinburgh. When arrived there, she found that her son was at the house of a cottager, in a small village about four miles from the city; he having met with the accident, in company with two other boys (who, as a reward, were allowed an evening's ride) near that place; and she was bid to prepare herself for his decease.

This was the substance of a letter which she wrote to me, in compliance with my request, as soon as she had seen the youth, for whom I had always a kind of pitying regard.

About a fortnight after this, I received a second letter from her, in which she excused herself for not having written again before that time, on account of an illness occasioned by her close attendance upon her son, who, however, she said, she was happy to tell me, had entirely recovered the accident, contrary to the predictions of three eminent surgeons. She then informed me that, by mere accident, she had met with a friend of her deceased husband's, who greatly interested himself in the child's welfare, and earnestly requested that she would send him to Eton, and that when she objected the narrowness of her finances, he offered to be at the additional expence, provided she would enter into a written engagement to use her influence with her son to repay him whenever he should inherit the Danvers estate. The gentleman's name, she said, was Ditton.

Notwithstanding all this appeared probable, there was an air of confusion which ran through the letter; and the style was strikingly different from the first; nevertheless, I passed it over without thinking much of it, till late circumstances brought it to my recollection.

Mrs. Pemberton returned, and appeared more gay than formerly. She often used to tell me of her having heard from her son at Eton, who sent his duty to me; but never, as before, showed me any of his letters, which rather surprised me; but I attributed it to the youth's not having really made any mention of me; which she was unwilling I should know.

About two months after her return she was visited by a gentleman who called himself Leigh. He staid with her two days, and when I looked in upon her one of the mornings, I found the table spread with writings, and she, upon seeing me, looked round her in evident confusion; but recovering herself, presented to me the Mr. Leigh, as her late husband's intimate friend. This gentleman, upon understanding Master Pemberton had been my pupil, told me he could give me pleasure, by informing me that the young rogue, as he termed him, was extremely improved in his person; but that in learning he made no great progress; and gave it for a reason that his old master had taught him more than his new one understood. I was sensible of, and displeased at the extravagance of the compliment, therefore made no reply, but asked if this was the gentleman who had taken Master Pemberton to Eton. Mrs. Pemberton blushed, and said no: that was a Mr. Ditton, but Mr. Leigh was his intimate friend, and joined with the other in a proper support for Thomas William—as she always would have him to be called. Conjectures, not very favorable to Mrs. Pemberton, spontaneously arose in my mind upon the seeming strangeness of the visit of this Mr. Leigh; though of a very different nature from the circumstances by which, as it now appears, it was occasioned. However I was so much displeased by it, that I requested my child not to be too hasty in again visiting Mrs. Pemberton.

About Christmas this Mr. Leigh again made his appearance, when a servant whom I had reared from infancy, and who had obtained leave from his master, who lives in York, to make me a visit, saw and knew him to be Lord Crumpford. This servant was just returned with his master from London; had often been at Lord Danvers' house, and had heard from the domestics of that nobleman a most despicable account of this feigned Mr. Leigh, and of the persecution which Lady Caroline Pemberton underwent from her father, on his account; for, it seems, the matter was grown very public, though the two lords aimed at all imaginable secrecy.

These suggestions filled my head with a set of incoherent ideas, which I could not reduce to order. Something, I seemed convinced, was wrong, but what, I could not guess with probability. Why Lord Crumpford, who wished to marry Lady Caroline Pemberton, should come twice into Yorkshire with a feigned name, on a visit to the mother of Lord Danvers' heir—was a mystery I could not fathom. My first reasonable alarm was for the youth's safety; on which account I was inclined to write to the master at Eton; but being minded to begin my enquiries at the school in Edinburgh, from whence he was said to be

taken, I staid till Lord Crumpford had left Kildwick, and then sent a letter to Mr. Blythe, desiring to know if he had heard from his young pupil, Thomas William Pemberton, since he left his school. The answer to this, you will easily believe, surprised me, when I tell you that it was a circumstantial account of HIS DEATH, with many expressions of wonder that I had not heard of it from Mrs. Pemberton.

To tell you all my sentiments—conjectures and conclusions—at this intelligence, would swell my letter to a volume. The result of my ponderings were—that I hastened back a particular enquiry of every minute circumstance attending his decease, with a request for a proper certificate of that event from the register of the parish where he was buried.

My letter was immediately answered: the particulars were given, but no certificate—the place of his interment being unknown to the lad's Edinburgh friends, Mrs. Pemberton having put into a hearse, which she followed in a coach, the coffin which contained the remains of her son; being desirous, as she said, to deposit him by the side of his father.

I was now somewhat puzzled to know how to proceed; but after examining very attentively the dictates of my mind, I determined to go to Mrs. Pemberton before she could have any information of the intelligence I had gained, and by an abrupt taxation to put her off her guard, and then, by confronting her with my evidence, endeavour to lead her to make a confession of the intended end of this dark business.

After some very hard conflicts, this method answered to my wishes: but for a considerable time she resolutely affirmed that her son had recovered; was still alive, and, at that period, at Eton: At length, upon my telling her that I knew her Mr. Leigh to be Lord Crumpford, and showing her the letters I had received from Edinburgh, she began to hesitate; thinking, without doubt, that it was probable her scheme would prove abortive. After much arguing, she intimated that as all her hopes of fortune must be entirely extinguished by the confession I pressed her to, she could not be worse off by keeping silent; hinting that her evidence would overturn any other. Finding, therefore, that nothing was to be done without, and being willing to prevent the probability of a public trial, by securing her before any measures were concerted between her and Lord Crumpford (who I then gathered by her confused intimations was deeply concerned in the affair) I rather too hastily, and perhaps reprehensibly, gave her my word that I would exert my utmost influence with every individual of the house of Danvers to procure her an annuity of fifty pounds during her life, if she would fully elucidate the business in question; and farther (for she would not even then comply) that I would not give up any papers which she should sign or put into my hands till I had gained security for this donation. She then (considering, I suppose, that Lord Crumpford would not have it in his power to perform the conditions, greatly in her favor, into which he had entered; and depending, it seems, upon the assurance I had given her) explicitly laid open the whole affair, and gave me his lordship's letters upon the subject.

The aggregate of the matter is, that Lord Crumpford, accompanied by his daughter, Miss Bomton, was at Edinburgh when Mrs. Pemberton lost her son, which she did in two days after she reached him, and that, hearing of the incident, he waited upon her, with much appearance of respect, to condole with her; being, as he said, a friend to all the family. After this, the treaty soon began, and was, I believe, soon finished. The corpse was carried several miles from Edinburgh, and, by the assistance of some hired creatures of Lord Crumpford's, buried in an unfrequented place; the youth's death was to be kept secret from all but those who, previously, had necessarily been made acquainted with it; and the story of his being gone to Eton propagated.

Lord Crumpford could not suppose this plot could long be kept concealed; but he doubtless expected to carry his point before it should become public; after which, it may be supposed from his character, he would have braved the opinion of the world.

Before Mrs. Pemberton would fall in with his measures, she insisted upon knowing the scheme he meant to pursue, upon which he pretended—for, beyond dispute, it *was* pretence—that he had long been passionately in love with Lady Caroline; that as he had already one child to provide for, and might have more, he could not afford to marry her with the small fortune to which, before the event in point, she was intitled; that now, he was determined to make himself happy with the finest young woman in existence, for which reason he did not wish it to be known that she was heiress to the Pemberton estate till after the marriage, as it might make his work difficult; that before the event should transpire, he was convinced Lord Danvers would readily comply with the proposals he should make, as he was his debtor for large sums of money; some of which Mrs. Pemberton believes were lost at gaming; that his taking the lady, as she herself must suppose, without a fortune of any consequence, would so gain upon such a disposition as hers, as to produce affection, and that, therefore, the plan in which he wished her to join, was not only innocent but laudable.

With these and such like plausible arguments, and with what, I doubt, prevailed still more, a promissory note of two thousand pounds to be paid on his marriage with Lady Caroline, (after which, poor Thomas William's death was to be announced as a recent event) did Lord Crumpford entice Mrs. Pemberton to come into his scheme, in which he would probably have succeeded had not Lady Caroline with-held her consent, and made her escape (for an escape I think it may justly be called) from the persecution she had, it seems, in part suffered. Of this, Lord Crumpford wrote Mrs. Pemberton a short account; telling her at the same time that, though this part of his plan might prove abortive, he had another which could not fail; therefore desired a continuance of secrecy. This was a letter of only a few lines, but he made her a promise of writing to her again as soon as his intention was digested; since which time she had not heard from him, therefore was in continual expectation of the promised information.

Having thus far succeeded, I immediately wrote down the particulars for her to sign, to which she, at first, objected, but upon my representing to her that I should not scruple to take my oath that I had heard from her what I had written, and that if she refused to assist in making the affair quite clear, she must expect obloquy instead of a

reward, she complied, on condition that I would promise to keep the matter as secret *as possible* in that part of the world. To this I readily assented, as though my hope of her thorough conviction of her errors was a little abated, I should be sorry to have her *hardened* in the practice of them; which might be the effect of public reproach. I therefore sent for my clerk and my grand-daughter, for Alethea is of sufficient age to be a witness, and my clerk Mrs. Pemberton was assured would not divulge any thing contrary to my commands, and she signed the paper in their presence; I likewise putting my name at the bottom.

After this I was minded to wait for Lord Crumpford's promised letter; therefore went to the man at whose house our letters are left, and desired him to let me know when any one came for Mrs. Pemberton before he sent it, as I wished to be with her when she received it. I was not under any apprehension that this man should wonder at my request; as on the present occasion I may allow myself the pleasure of saying, that all my parishioners have an implicit confidence in me, and never would think of my asking them to do any thing wrong. This man supposed the letter I was anxious about, was one from poor Thomas William. Without answering his surmise, I left him to continue in his mistake.

Once or twice I was disappointed by letters from other quarters, but yesterday, which was the third time of his sending to me, I went upon his message, and was sitting with her when a letter from Lord Crumpford was put into her hands.

Upon her reading it, a repetition of my question, as upon the two former occasions of—From the Viscount, Madam?—was answered with the deepest blush of confusion. I see I am right, I added: What plan is he now pursuing? For some moments she continued silent; then told me that she could not possibly show me the letter she had received, though she knew it would not be to any purpose to deny its being from his lordship.

It would be needless to repeat the ensuing altercation. After some time spent in conversation on the subject, I arose in displeasure; telling her that our treaty was at an end: that as she refused her assistance—the terms on which she had agreed to be benefited—I likewise refused to exert my influence in her favor; and would leave her to consider whether Lord Crumpford [she must remember the information of which I was in possession] could keep any promise which (as she intimated) he then, or before, had made her, on the successful issue of any plan he could form on this event.

"You have ruined my fortune Sir," said she—rising from her chair in a rage.—"No; he cannot proceed in his scheme. I am *convinced* he cannot. *It is impossible*;" she added, after a pause, "therefore remember *your* engagements; take the letter and make, with all my heart, your most of it."

I was strongly tempted to reject her offer, as what I had already obtained was sufficient to reinstate in their rights the injured party; but as I had given my promise that if *she would* assist to the utmost of her power, I would endeavour to procure the before-mentioned stipend, my refusing that assistance which she, however reluctantly, was at

last, inclined to render, would be such an evasive breach of engagement as I could not reconcile to rectitude, though I could not but think her entirely undeserving any consideration: I therefore took the letter, and, when I had read it, did not grudge its price. The substance of it is an account of his vile new plot, which is already in its progress.

Lord Crumpford, encouraged by the belief that the incident of little Pemberton's death has not yet transpired, is led on to hope it will subside as a trivial circumstance; which he says is not likely to undergo any investigation, as the Danvers family are prepossessed with a continual idea of his existence. He has, therefore, dressed; instructed, and put to Eton school, under the assumed name of Thomas William Pemberton, a lad about sixteen years old; who, he darkly intimates, is a natural son of his brother the late viscount, from whom, about two years back, he inherited the title and estate. But these expressions are so ambiguous, that this particular cannot be ascertained. The boy, he says, is sharp and promising; exceedingly pleased with his new situation, and elate with the prospect of his future dignity—for he was obliged to trust him with the outlines of the scheme, as it was necessary the masters and scholars should acknowledge and treat him as the undoubted heir of the Danvers Earldom. So far, he says, from running any hazard by this communication, it will bind the youth to keep the secret with the utmost caution; he having a pretty ripe understanding, though it has not been much cultivated; for which reason it was represented in the school that his education had been sadly neglected, through the straitness of his mother's fortune. He then says he is not incited to adopt this plan to revenge himself on Lady Caroline, though she has so ungratefully refused him, nor of resentment to Lord Danvers for his shameful breach of articles (whom he will effectually prevent from ever being benefited by the suing of any fine, as he has heard him project) but to save the title from extinction, and to benefit and aggrandize his own family, as he intends this boy should privately (as if without his knowledge) marry his daughter, ere much time elapses, and that the matter shall, in due time be made public. From this grand part of the plan I am willing to hope I was mistaken in an idea, raised by the cloudiness of the expressions when he first mentions him, of this youth's being more nearly related to him than a nephew. Yet what will such a dark spirit stick at! He may think incest a crime of but small magnitude; especially (he may advance in palliation) as the parties, if kept in ignorance of the consanguinity, may justly be termed innocent.

I hope I do not judge him too severely; though I must own my charity for his lordship burns very dimly.

Lord Crumpford's capital piece of art to seduce Mrs. Pemberton to connivance is yet to be told. After describing the effects of measures he endeavours to extenuate, he sums all up by urging her to allow him to hope she will agree to participate in the wealth and honors thus secured to his family, by accepting, some time hence, the title—the hand—and the heart, of the present head of the house of Crumpford. He then assures her that he would hasten down to solicit this favor directly, did he not think an immediate union between them might suggest inconvenient ideas; but tells her that as soon as his *son in law and daughter* are Earl and Countess of Danvers, (hinting in very odd language that the present possessor of the title seems drawing near his end—*being very infirm for his years*—) she may depend upon his honor; not only as a reward for her assistance, but

as an indulgence to himself. He says he shall consider the intermediate time as suspending his happiness, but consoles himself with a repetition of the probability *that the lease of Lord Danvers will soon be expired.*

This, sir, is the sum of the intelligence of which I am possessed.

I will not add unnecessarily to the length of this epistle by useless comment, as every particular will speak for itself; but, depending upon hearing from you immediately, subscribe myself

your respectful
and obedient servant,
ANTHONY BROOMLEY.

LETTER, VI.

LADY CAROLINE PEMBERTON,
(In the Character of Maria Birtles)
TO LADY STANLEY.

London, March 26th.

Ever dear and truly honored Madam,
IN obedience to your very kind injunction, I write as soon after my journey as fatigue allows me to use my pen. I know not why I was so extremely tired with travelling so small a number of miles, except from the great reluctance I found to proceed in a road that carried me from a house in which I could dwell with pleasure during the remaining period of my existence.

Shall I endeavour to paint the happiness, so congenial with the inmost feeling of my heart, which I, for many weeks, experienced within the pale of Alverston Park? I will not. I cannot. Shall I give a description of the regret which filled my soul at quitting, perhaps for ever, the inhabitants of its beloved inclosures? Equally impossible.

For ever—did I say? I did. Ah madam! there is the sting! This was more than, when I saw you, I dare trust myself to say. My grief at raising the probable conjecture, would have been too extreme for observation: and till within a few days of my leaving you I had hoped—what did I *not* hope. But my hope is destroyed; and its destruction was the cause of my being obliged to fly, with such velocity, to London.

Yet to what purpose thus wanders my pen in delineating the shades of past felicity and its contrary!

Revered Lady Stanley! How shall I express my thanks for the kind—the affectionate, the *parental* treatment I received from you and the *equally* revered Sir

Edward, during my residence at Alverston Park! I feel the poverty of my language when I attempt to speak my gratitude, in this my farewell letter.

Pardon the presumptuous hope which led me to look forward to the time of my being distinguished as Miss Stanley's friend—of its being no more remembered that I ever entered your family in any other capacity.

Pardon, my dear madam—pardon and pity all the deficiencies of your too much obliged,

ever grateful,
and respectful humble servant,
MARIA BIRTLES.

LETTER, VII.

MR. STANLEY, TO SIR CHARLES CONWAY.

Bristol, Thursday night, March 26th.

I Wrote to you, Charles, yesterday morning. I was then a miserable dog; but am now one of the happiest fellows existing.

The dear—the lovely—the charming Lucinda—Harrington no longer—has compleatly blest me. I now think of her with transport and extacies. Her beauty shall be the subject of my contemplation; and the fiery squint of her eyes—lately thought almost disgusting—now be allowed to kindle the most grateful raptures. But let me lead in order to this surprising revolution—to the subject of my almost unbounded felicity.

In my last I told you that my charmer—not then distinguished by that appellation—was going to Bath to see Miss Horton whose aunt, Mrs. Bellmin, had sent a pressing request that Lady Lucinda would favor her niece with a visit, as she was very much indisposed and greatly desired her dear friend's company for a few hours. Lady Glynn, as I said, objected to this request, but was over-ruled, and it was agreed that Lady Lucinda should go in the afternoon. I, as a matter of course, offered to attend her, but the sweet creature, in the most obliging manner and with an enchanting smile, said her dear Belinda would some-time hence, think herself greatly distinguished by a visit from a man, to whom—with a down-cast eye she said it—she was so soon to vow duty: but that, at present, it would, she doubted, greatly disorder her; as her nerves, *poor dear!* were extremely weak.

I submitted; and it was agreed the young lady should go in Sir Philip's chariot and four; her maid with her; and to be attended by Sir Philip's gentleman and another servant on horse-back; and that she was to be at home *in good time* in the evening.

Soon after one o'clock—so desirous was she of spending a long afternoon with "*her dear friend*"—she was ready to step into the chariot, having eat a piece of cold chicken and a slice of ham, as she had not patience to wait till dinner was ready, though Lady Glynn had purposely ordered it to be early. Delivered from what I was then so insensible as to think a miserable clogg—I spent the rest of the day pleasantly enough in walking round a considerable part of the town. In the evening, about half after eight, Sir Philip called at my rooms and showed me a letter which he had just received from his niece: the purport of it was—that Miss Horton was so extremely ill she found it impossible to leave her that evening; that she should detain the chariot, but would send home the horses, which she requested might return for her the next day as soon as dinner was ended; and that she should keep Chapone to attend her orders, lest any other message should be necessary, as her friend, who was at times, delirious, seemed to be quite in a frenzy whenever she offered to leave her.

Sir Philip was, I found, a little angry at the young lady's taking the liberty of staying from home all night, without his leave; from which, and from some other past incidents I found they had thought it necessary to keep her under pretty close confinement.

About three o'clock this afternoon the servants were again sent with the horses to Bath, to conduct Lady Lucinda to Bristol. At the entrance of the town they were met by Mrs. Sally—her ladyship's waiting-maid—who told them that Miss Horton still continued extremely ill, and that they must go to the inn and wait there till she saw them again. She then gave them a crown, which she said her lady had ordered them for liquor.

The command to spend the money they did not hesitate to obey, therefore went to the inn as desired; called for a bowl of punch, and waited quietly till near six o'clock, when recollecting their master's injunctions to be home early, one of the men went to the door, and there saw, talking to the coachman of the London diligence, Mrs. Sally, who, as soon as she saw the servant, took from her bosom a letter, telling him in the greatest seeming hurry and confusion, that Miss Horton was drawing very near her end, and that he must make all possible haste home with the chariot and all the horses, as it was impossible for Lady Lucinda to leave her friend; and giving him the letter, desired him to deliver it to his master the moment he should reach home. The man hesitated, and was going to speak, but she stopped him with—"Ask no questions. Do as you are ordered, and away."—At which instant she hastened from him, and turned into the next street. About nine o'clock the chariot was driven into Sir Philip's yard, at which time, according to an extorted promise to attend at supper, I was sitting in conversation with him and his lady, who, upon hearing the rattling of the carriage, immediately exclaimed, with evident pleasure, "The dear child is now come."—and rose to go to meet her; but before she could reach the door, a servant entered and laid upon a table that stood between Sir Philip and me, a letter directed, as I instantly saw, TO SIR PHILIP AND LADY GLYNN BARONIGHT—Sir Philip stared with astonishment, and the lady was seemingly struck mute; for she likewise (following the servant) saw the singular direction. The baronet at length recollected himself; took up the letter and perused (as I afterwards knew, for he read it first to himself) the following lines, written in a legible school-boy hand.

Wednesday forenoon.

Hornered Sir and Lady,

Before this can have reached your hands Lady Lucinda and myself will neerly have reeched Cretny Green and be marred in the holly bands of matrimoney. You will be pleased to consider that it never will be to no purpose to go after us, as we shall have near forty hours the start, as this letter is not to be given to you till nine at clock of Thursday night and we left Brister at one at clock to day, and though I am a servant and no scollar it is my intention not to disgrace my lady's choice, so shall go with her to France to learn French and to go to school for other things to be as far as I am able a gentleman, therefore I hope for this good design you will be so good now that things cannot be helped as to let us have some money for you knows sir as I am now yours and her ladyship's relation and

cannot help it it will be better than my staying in England till I know how to behave myself. I write this at home before we set out while her dear ladyship is dressing herself that we may not have nothing to do when we arrives at Bath but to whip forward all three in a post chaise and four, for Miss Horton is to go with us in our tower as my dear lady and I you must know sir and madam has kept company for all the time since she came home from France, and we have been a long time been trying how to manage all these matters. Mrs. Bellmin is to go to London and Sally is gone too as soon as she have given Nicholas this letter that you may not do nothing to punish neither of them, and Nicholas is not to ask Sally no questions about where I am for if he do Sally is not to give no answer. My lady send her duty to you and her ladyship and I remain sir yours and her ladyship's dutiful servant to command and by this time kinsman

GEORGE CHAPONE.

Now, Charles, for the pencil of Hogarth, or the pen of his congenial genius—Fielding—to give you an exact picture—mind and body—of our trio, upon the publication of the contents of this letter. But previous to our being made acquainted with the catastrophe, the baronet was no sooner sensible of the *sum total*, than his eyes were perfectly glazed—he foamed at the mouth—threw his fine queue-wig into the farthest corner of the room, and rising in a rage, uttered a string of tremendous oaths, without connexion; without meaning; and then—“She is *gone*. She is *off*. That rogue—that cursed rogue Chapone has carried her away. *I tell you they are gone to Gretna Green, and are by this time married.*”

Down, at the conclusion of this speech, dropped poor Lady Glynn—Sir Philip stamping and storming about the room. I rang the bell; ordered assistance, and desired her ladyship might be carried into her own chamber, and then sent for medical advice. To describe the scene which ensued between the baronet and me, is absolutely beyond my power. However, as soon as I could, I persuaded him to listen to reason, and convinced him of the impropriety (as all pursuit must be in vain) of making more bustle about the affair than could be helped; and advised him to mention it as a matter for which he was extremely sorry; but that as Lady Lucinda Harrington had acted so indiscreetly, she must take the consequence. I likewise represented the propriety of complying, after some little time, with the request for money; as I thought the plan of going to France ought, after such an event, to be encouraged.

To all this Sir Philip listened in sullen silence, but at length confessed I was right; said he would endeavour to act according to my advice, and would write in the style I recommended to Mr. Barnard.

He then sent down for the servants who had been at Bath, and examined them, when they informed him of the particulars, respecting their dismissal by Sally, which I just now gave you. After this, I motioned to take my leave, but he requested me to see Lady Glynn before I went, and to endeavour to *mollify* her a little. Upon my consenting to stay, Sir Philip sent, not wishing, as it seemed, to see her alone, to request her ladyship's company in the drawing-room. In about a quarter of an hour she appeared; her face covered with tears. The baronet gave me a push on the side to begin my *mollifications*,

and I, after a previous attempt to soothe her, repeated the same arguments I had advanced to Sir Philip, and, after a much longer time, with the same success.

Their seeing me (whom they must suppose to be greatly interested) so calm upon the occasion, was a considerable relief to them; as they were, I believe, ashamed of the treatment I had received from their relation.

Before I finished my visit, the matter was talked over with some degree of temper; though their grief was truly poignant.

And so, Charles, the lady has now got her own George. For this George—George Chapone, or (as I have been informed he was always called till Sir Philip chose to Frenchify him) GEORGE CAPON is THE George. This was the occasion—But thus elate, I cannot sit to reconcile particulars. Look into my first account of this business, and you will find the whole elucidated. All my young madam's conduct is, from this clew explainable. Her fainting at Mortimer Lodge, and the airs she there assumed—her request that Chapone might convey her home — In short, the entire farce, the occasion of which was so misconstrued by a parcel of conjecturing gossips, is laid open to view. And most bravely did I swallow the deluding dose, which was so nicely made palatable by that confounded misleading portrait. And now the wonder returns. Who the plague could— But I will not, at this time bewilder my imagination. Present matters of fact shall occupy my ideas. The termination of this event delights me. I seem so easy—so happy—so like a new creature in a new world, that I cannot express my sensations. Lately so heavy—so fettered—so oppressed! now all air; all freedom; all spirit. My ideas seem at liberty to range round the universe: but, Charles—chide not: frown not; for they rest, and will rest, with MARIA BIRTLES; and in the morning, as soon as it be light, not intending to go to bed, will I fly upon the wings of the most ardent affection, *to that only charmer of my heart*. This is all I mean to say at present upon this subject.

After I left Sir Philip's, which I did about eleven o'clock, I went to Lady Bingham's card-rout, (having previously received an invitation) where were all the people whom I know in Bristol; and to the principal amongst them, I imparted, in confidence, *the events of the day*, that when they were made public, it might not be supposed to have been any concern of mine; for fortunately Lady Glynn, from what motive I know not, had particularly desired *the intended union* might be kept as secret as possible, till we came slap-dash upon them—was her ladyship's expression—with a wedding. To this all parties—I in particular—readily assented; and I was looked upon as an acquaintance of Sir Philip's; though, I believe, not without some *surmises* respecting his ward. To obviate this entirely, I ought to stay a few days longer in Bristol, instead of disappearing just at this crisis; but, Charles, I must—I will go to Alverston: and that directly. My call at Lady Bingham's, where I staid till after one and where I was in *random spirits*, was calculated to quiet any apprehensions that my pride might otherwise have been under; therefore as soon as I have finished this, and a short note to Emma, I shall call up Jerry and prepare for Alverston, being determined to reach it, if no unforeseen accident intervenes, to-morrow evening.

Jones will take care to transmit to the Park whatever letters may arrive for me after my departure. Yours of the twenty-fourth, I received just before I went to Sir Philip's. Its contents are singular. To some of them I shall reply in my journey; as I must unavoidably, though unwillingly, make some few stops upon the road. When I first perused your letter, your sentiments of Lady Lucinda, though so sparingly expressed, and though only demonstrative of what I was before well convinced of, vexed my very soul. But I am now happily delivered from the effects of my own folly; for folly in a superlative degree I must ever acknowledge it to have been; and hope to profit from the remembrance.

With respect to Mrs. Digby—I know her better than you do. But more of that another time. Only depend upon this—It is *you* she is aiming to entrap; and she has such a boundless confidence in her powers of fascination, as to allow herself to believe no man, upon whom she looks with favor, can elude her enchantments.

So much for Mrs. Digby.

Charles, farewell. Send me soon your congratulations.

GEORGE STANLEY.

LETTER, VIII.

SIR C. CONWAY, TO GEORGE STANLEY, ESQ.

Yarmouth, Friday evening, March 27th.

JUST after I had sent off my last letter to you, I received three of yours; one dated Saturday, and the two others, Sunday morning and night. From the last of these I saw, with inexpressible concern, the disappointment (though you were unwilling to enlarge upon it) you had met with in the course of the day. On the Wednesday and Thursday I received two more, and was still more distressed; yet so critical was your situation, I resolved not to write till something was finally determined. However my resolution gave way, and I was just sitting down, with my pen in my hand, to ask you if my sending for you by an express, as if on business of the greatest consequence, as surely this may be called, would not necessarily procrastinate the matter till some effectual relief might arise, when yours, respecting poor Mr. Fowler's death, was brought up to me. I cannot, Stanley, speak my anxiety. Rouse yourself to action; exert your resolution to get out of this miserable dilemma. But what do I urge! You who are so intimate with the circumstances must best know what *can* be—what *ought* to be done. Only remember this—every atom of power that I possess is accompanied—is exceeded—by my will to free you from future wretchedness.

And now, on this subject, no more.

Notwithstanding your prohibition, Mr. Evelyn was urgent to write to you, but knowing the true nobleness of your mind, I requested an answer to your letter might devolve upon me. He, with some unwillingness, acquiesced, and I ought to make, in his

name, the most lively acknowledgments of one of the most grateful hearts in the universe. But your own is calculated to supply, on this head, all I omit to express. Mr. Evelyn sets out within half an hour for Alverston.

Mrs. Digby plagues me heartily. But I will spare you a recital of my disquietudes, at this juncture. You have borne with me long and often, and have now torments of your own sufficient.

Write every hour till your fate is decided.

Ever and faithfully yours,

CHARLES CONWAY.

LETTER, IX.

MISS STANLEY, TO LADY STANLEY.

Woodstock, March 27th.

YOUR letter, my ever dearest madam, of Tuesday's date, reached me but a few hours back. I ought to have received it yesterday, and I much wish I had; as I then should have set off this morning for Alverston; whereas, except I make Sunday one of my travelling days, I must now defer my journey till Monday.

Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Eleanor are kind beyond expression: they not only give my Charlotte most willing leave to accompany me, but to stay in Derbyshire as long as she pleases.

We this morning breakfasted at Mrs. Stanhope's, where I received your letter; all of which (except the most material parts about my brother, and to which I will not even attempt a reply) I read to the happy circle. I dare not tell you their sentiments upon it, lest you suspect your girl of having lately learned to flatter.

Mrs. Stanhope has, for some days past, been rather indisposed; for which reason Miss Lewis cannot be persuaded to leave her, though her good aunt warmly presses her accompanying Charlotte and me to Alverston; she, however, promises, if nothing preventing occurs, to go a few weeks before Charlotte leaves it, that they may together return to Woodstock.

Mrs. Lawson had yesterday a letter from Major Carrington, about some of her law-business. In it he tells her that Lord Danvers, now reconciled to his lovely daughter, intends very soon to visit his Woodstock cottage; and that Lady Caroline and, he believes, Mr. and Mrs. Maynard, are to accompany him. I will not express a wish to see this celebrated of our sex, lest it implies a regret to leave Woodstock, when, upon my word, it is with unaffected pleasure that I think of setting out on Monday morning,

because I hope thereby to convey some satisfaction to my dearest mother. We are to go in Mrs. Lawson's carriage to Coventry, where, on Monday evening, that we may pursue and finish our journey next day, we hope to be met by your order.

But, my dear madam, I cannot tell you my concern at knowing Maria Birtles has left Alverston. Often have I, with pleasure, contemplated the idea of her being at my return (for I would have insisted upon her compliance) raised from a situation to which she is greatly superior, and placed in the light of one of my favored friends, whose company I consider as an obligation.

Nothing can console me for her absence but the hope of soon hearing from her, that I may prevail upon her to return quickly into Derbyshire. Your account of her was very interesting to our party. They all say they long to see the admirable girl.

Mrs. Lawson had the other day a letter from Miss Rachel. She professes a hearty contempt for Lady Blurton and *the Honorable Miss Barbara Tupps*, but is so bewitched by London and its gaieties, that rather than leave it, she will endure their company. Upon my word she does, in some parts of her letters, make them appear extremely ridiculous; and that, as she says, by merely relating their actions.

I mean to write half a dozen lines to my brother, to inform him of my leaving Woodstock; but shall avoid touching upon *any other* subject.

Yesterday I had a letter from Mrs. Pritchard, which gave me a very pleasing account of Lady Davison's health. She thinks herself so much mended from her residence at Runcan, that she means to continue there some time longer.

It is with difficulty that I forbear to mention my brother's affairs, but as I hope so soon to see you, I will, till I have that pleasure, suppress my inclination, and conclude with the kindest compliments of all around me; with expressing my hope that my father's indisposition (as you mentioned its being but slight) is already removed, and with subscribing myself

yours, my dear madam,

with affectionate duty,

EMMA STANLEY.

LETTER, X.

MR. MAYNARD, TO THE REVEREND ANTHONY
BROOMLEY.

St. James's Square, March 27th, 1789.

THE inclosed note, reverend and worthy sir, will be your security for the annuity you promised to procure for the widow of my late cousin Pemberton.

The astonishment with which I read your letter is beyond expressing; and I cannot forbear to say that the character of the writer, so visible in every line of it, made no small part of my surprise. Let not this, my dear sir, be construed flattery. I have too warm a wish to stand well in your opinion to dare to offer you such an incense: but you must prepare yourself to expect the most fervent expressions of applause and veneration, and must permit your consciousness to do me the justice of crediting my sincerity.

Take no thought for Miss Broomley's future provision. That is no more an object of your concern. One of the loveliest and best young women in England—Lady Caroline Pemberton—courts her acceptance of her future friendship; and Lady Caroline stops not at words where deeds are requisite.

I write, my good sir, as you will observe, in the most concise manner possible, because I hope very soon to have the happiness of making my acknowledgments, and of consulting you, respecting my procedures, in person.

It is a great pleasure to me that I can claim the honor of perfectly remembering you. I have more than once retrospected your conduct at the Edinburgh election; which is all I will venture to say on that subject.

Your letter, ever since its arrival, has constantly employed me. But for the business it has occasioned here, I should, immediately upon the receipt of it, have set out for your village. On Monday morning, however, I hope to begin my journey; and as I shall not think of sleeping much on the road, I expect to be with you on Tuesday evening.

Will you believe and excuse me, if I say that I seem as if I was going to see an old friend? Your letter has made me so familiar with you, that I cannot help thinking I have known you from my infancy. Mrs. Maynard commands me to convey her *duty* to you; it is her own expression—and her love to Miss Broomley, whom she hopes very soon to have the pleasure of seeing: but Lady Caroline's gratitude and sentiments of affection for you and your Alethea, sets expression at defiance. Yet I am persuaded that the chief satisfaction which my amiable cousin reaps from this event, arises from tenderness to her father. As for his lordship—he is not yet, for some prudent considerations, acquainted with this change in his circumstances. When I see you, I am convinced I shall lay open to you all particulars; being, dear and worthy sir,

your obliged, grateful,
and respectful humble servant,
AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, XI.

MR. MAYNARD, TO SIR WILLIAM JENYNS.

St. James's Square, March 27th.

THE enclosed letter, my dear Sir William, from the reverend Mr. Broomley, which I send express, will speak for itself. Doubtless your surprise at its contents will be equal to that which seized me upon perusal. Mrs. Maynard was almost beside herself with joy. Lady Caroline was the calmest of the three; yet truly happy and truly grateful did she seem on account of a father whom she so devoutly loves. I am convinced the pleasure she received at this sudden turn of events, arose chiefly from considerations respecting him; for to own the truth to you, Sir William, I doubt the heart of our lovely girl is not quite undisturbed. But of this not now. I have a plan arising, which I hope will produce some relief to her disquietude.

I must request your coming to town immediately. Lord Danvers, yesterday, confessed the whole of his situation. It was—and he thinks still is—a deplorable one. Lady Caroline was necessarily made acquainted with it, upon which she so peremptorily insisted upon being allowed to part with her jewels, that there was no resisting her. Their value was to be given in to-morrow by Heathcote. This circumstance very fortunately retarded the signing of the deeds already engrossed; for now will I take advantage of his lordship's ignorance of this turn of his fortune, to secure my beloved cousin a handsome future provision: in doing which, I am certain of your approbation, but I want your assistance likewise, as I do not intend to carry on this piece of *kind* deceit, even to himself, one moment longer than is necessary, but as soon as Caroline be secure, ask his pardon and unfold the whole: for which reason I request your presence; it being impossible to conclude in what manner he will receive the explanation. However as he is a man of sense, and, I think, keenly alive to the wretched effects of his unhappy propensity to gaming, I have hope his conscience will involuntarily justify me; as he cannot impute to me any regard to self-interest. If it happens otherwise, I shall be quite insensible to his anger, because, knowing him so well as I do, I shall be self-satisfied: for were I to be accessory in throwing the whole power over his estate into his hands, without any provision for his daughter, I should think myself criminal.

Lady Caroline knows not the measure I am pursuing. I have requested her to be silent respecting this event for a day or two, to which she very reluctantly consented. But I told her I must be complied with, if she wished her father's future happiness.

My design is this—The signing of the deeds respecting the Derbyshire estate, was, as I have said, retarded on account of the insufficiency of the sum arising from its valuation; for which reason my cousin insisted upon disposing of her diamonds; but even their produce, great as it must be, would have left a deficiency; so greatly beyond conjecture has this unthinking man involved himself. I will therefore offer to his lordship to raise a sum sufficient to set him entirely at liberty, if he will execute a deed which shall

secure to his daughter all the estate round the Priory (which is, I think, a good five thousand a year, and which he had no power to mortgage) if ever he becomes heir to the estates in general: but this only if he dies without a son; for in that case the deed shall be void, upon payment of twenty thousand pounds to Lady Caroline.

With this I think my uncle will immediately fall in; but I cannot say that I am quite indifferent to the disapprobation which may possibly succeed; and to own the truth, I feel myself rather awkward in my pursuit of a measure so *indirect*. Yet what *can* I do! Put it into the power of one of the most indiscreet men upon earth not only to bring, a second time, to the brink of ruin, one of the most deserving young women existing, but again to involve *himself* in destruction? Forbid it prudence! Forbid it rectitude! I am determined—and will not permit a false delicacy to destroy the future welfare of my family.

Suppose I were to neglect the present opportunity, and afterwards the earl should repeat his folly, and madly throw from himself and his daughter the means of happiness now once more offered to his acceptance—how should I be blamed and condemned by every individual who would know I had had the power to stop the *might-be-apprehended* devastation!—though perhaps (if by the intended management all things go smoothly on) the same beings will favor me with their censure. And *let* them censure me. The opinion of such people must always be despised, because none but the weak-minded ever judge by events. The *motive*, when it can be made to appear, is the criterion of human actions; and the *only* one to which either the Wise or the Good will attend; and by that for justification I abide. However, I earnestly request your presence; not *alone* because I shall be happy to have the sanction of your approbation, but as you have more influence with this uncle of mine than any other man breathing.

I am, my dear sir,
your affectionate,
and obedient servant,
AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, XII.

SIR WILLIAM JENYNS, TO AUGUSTUS
MAYNARD, ESQ.

Enfield, March 27th, 1789.

DEAR SIR,
I Return you Mr. Broomley's very extraordinary letter, without comments; for my sentiments upon its contents would exceed the limits of four pages.

Were I able to move, I would be with you by the time you receive this, but the gout has seized both my knees and one ankle: consequently, I write in bed.

Go on and prosper, my dear friend, in your well-concerted scheme, which I would not, on any account, have you relinquish.

Show this scribble, which I write with extreme difficulty, to Lord Danvers, that he may see, from under my hand, my high approbation of your plan, which is truly consonant with all your generous and spirited exertions, shown on divers occasions, to promote the honor and happiness of his family. Tell him I wish to revive in his memory the transaction of the summer in the year eighty five; and then assure him and Lady Caroline that I most cordially congratulate them upon this great event.

With my compliments to Mrs. Maynard, whose happiness on this occasion I can easily conceive,

I am, dear sir,

yours affectionately,

WILLIAM JENYNS.

I will thank you to let me soon hear from you again, and if you will inform Major Carrington I greatly wish him to come to Enfield.

LETTER, XIII.

MR. MAYNARD, TO SIR WILLIAM JENYNS.

March 28th, 1789.

I May now, my dear sir, defy the verdict of even the cunningly-wise ones who judge by events, as the effect of my plan was happy beyond my expectation. However, as I should have exonerated myself had it not been so successful, I will not claim, nor even accept any praise for the good it produced more than I projected.

After I received your letter, for which I much thank you, I went and gave my lawyer the finishing directions about the deed, which was ready for signing this morning at nine, when I went to Lord Danvers, who was then at breakfast, and made him the intended offer, which, as I expected, he accepted very readily, and calling up the witnesses, it was immediately executed, but the disagreeable part was still to come: however, as soon as I found myself alone with his lordship, I told him I had then to congratulate him and beg his pardon, but that before I explained myself, I requested him to read that letter—putting into his hand yours of yesterday. With considerable surprise, as you will imagine, but with seeming attention, he perused it, then asked me what it meant. I repeated that I must beg his pardon; and that I hoped he would not *determine* to be angry before he had well considered the motive which excited me to take advantage of a communication which had been made to me. I then assured him Lady Caroline was entirely a stranger to what had that morning been done; but that I would then go home and acquaint her with the particulars. At saying this, I put into his hands the letter of Mr. Broomley, and telling him I would presume to wait upon him again in about an hour and half, withdrew.

I then went home to Lady Caroline, who has resided with us ever since her return to London, and gave her the deed for her perusal; which (as I expected from her) procured me more blame than praise. She could not bear the idea of such an advantage having been taken of the earl, though I convinced her that *his* benefit was, at least, as much promoted by it as her own. Between eleven and twelve, I again went to Berkeley Square, and chusing, at this crisis, to send up my name, was desired to walk up immediately. And now I cannot do justice to his lordship. He was affected, even to shedding tears; and thanked me in such expressions for the active concern I had ever shown for his welfare, that I began to be almost sorry for the late transaction, from the idea of its having been unnecessary.

My uncle, most assuredly, has a fine understanding and a noble spirit, would he but correct that ruining inclination for gambling, and for some of its kindred vices; and with great pleasure I tell you that I have now very lively hopes of his thorough conviction and reformation.

We soon turned to the business of the reverend vicar's letter. The earl's rage when Lord Crumpford was brought upon the carpet, is beyond description. Indeed I believe he is one of the vilest wretches upon the habitable globe. What measures can be taken with him I do not know. When matters are settled (and till then we mean to keep every thing respecting this event between ourselves) his lordship will have opinion of council how to proceed to bring him to some exemplary punishment—not adequate; for that is impossible: and if that cannot be inflicted by a legal process, equal to his wishes, he will have all given at large in the public papers; mentioning as lightly as possible (from a due regard to good Mr. Broomley's promise) the part of Mrs. Pemberton; her readiness to comply, or reluctance to confess, making the case neither better nor worse for Lord Crumpford; therefore it will not be *necessary*, from a principle of justice, to insist upon either. Not that I think she *merits* this consideration, even though every allowance be granted in her favor: but Mr. Broomley's engagements must be sacredly attended to, and his motive for this promise was a pious one—He was not willing to suffer a lost sheep to be prevented from returning, by reproach for having strayed, which is too often effected by the violent *outwardly* virtuous of the human race, who, because they never were assailed by temptation, or are, perhaps, placed by fortune, out of the reach of its influence, press, without mercy, on the less happy, though *not* less valuable of our species, who, by a complicated train of events, fall from a height, probably, much greater than that in which their condemners stand; for which reason they wish to keep them down, lest (rising from their fall, bettered perhaps by its painful effects) they should obtain a state of superiority still more elevated than the former.

However I doubt, with the worthy divine, that Mrs. Pemberton does not come within this description; nevertheless, as we are incompetent judges of the human heart, it is worthy of his character to wish to reclaim her; and from the late discoveries he will have a right to urge, in terms explicit, her reformation.

When I sat down to give you an account of our proceedings, I did not, Sir William, intend to moralize; but the subject naturally produced serious reflections.

It was now agreed that I should set off for Kildwick on Monday morning by break of day; and after I had settled matters with its reverend pastor, proceed to visit his lordship's estate in Cumberland; which, if I judge right of its condition, may be sold to advantage; and the money arising from that sale will, doubtless, more than answer all present occasions. His lordship talks of a magnificent present for Miss Broomley. Five thousand guineas he mentioned. What he will determine upon I do not know. After we had settled the above particulars, he expressed a wish to see *his dear Caroline* (very tenderly, indeed, he spoke) immediately. I therefore dispatched a note to my Harriet, desiring her to hasten with her cousin to Berkeley Square, and, when arrived, to send up for me. My summons was obeyed without loss of time, and when they alighted, I went down to receive them, and as Caroline wished to see her father by himself for a few minutes, Mrs. Maynard and I went into an adjoining room, where staying till we thought we heard Lady Caroline's voice as if crying, we went into the study, and when I opened the door, were struck by the sight of the lovely girl kneeling at her father's feet, while his

arms were clasped round her neck, and both in tears. The cause of this affecting appearance which we afterwards *gleaned*, from first one, then the other, was as follows.

Lady Caroline, upon seeing his lordship, sprang to him with open arms, and with the most lively expression of joy, at the means of happiness being once more offered to his acceptance, congratulated him on this important event; and immediately dropping on one knee, put into his hands the bond which he had signed that morning; protesting her ignorance of its being drawn, and requesting his re-acceptance of it, as he valued her tranquility. The earl, it seems, was so deeply penetrated by this instance of her duty; affection, and nobleness of spirit, that he could make no reply; but throwing his arms around her neck, wept over her till we, by our entrance, interrupted the affecting scene.

“Augustus! Harriet!” said his lordship as we advanced, “see here one of the best, as well as loveliest daughters of the human race. But I always knew her merits. Happier had it been for me, had I always rewarded them. For the future—nephew”—interrupting himself—“take this deed”—giving me that which my cousin had returned—“keep it in security; and let not Caroline come at it any more. And now be it your first care that another bond be drawn up to oblige me to pay her in quarterly payments, a thousand pounds a year, during my life, for her own private use; after that, assist me in making my will, and to all besides I will be indifferent.” And then, after a pause—“Maynard I will seek happiness upon a new plan, and here, in the presence of all you, most near to me, make a vow never to loose nor to win, at one sitting, or in one day more than ten guineas,”—to which he bound himself by the most solemn oath; and then calling to him Lady Caroline, who, had risen at our entrance and was at that time sitting upon a sofa leaning against Mrs. Maynard, he embraced her with the greatest fervency; calling her his Angel-daughter, and telling her his highest future happiness should be in making hers as compleat as possible.

But I must not go on with this description. Suffice it that we spent together a most happy day; his lordship regretting only your absence. He says he *must* soon see you, therefore on Monday, after I shall have left London, he means to take Caroline and Harriet with him to dine at Enfield; and knowing I intended writing to you, he bid me tell you that if their company will not mend you he shall deem you incurable.

I do not remember for these dozen years to have seen Lord Danvers so pleasing a companion. It would be a pleasure to me to relate the conversation till, and during, dinner; but I must not indulge myself, having much business to transact before I sleep, and the night advances. We had an early repast at his lordship’s, and at five returned to St. James' Square, since which time I have been employed in writing.

If an opportunity offers, I mean to morrow to give the earl some intimation of the state of his daughters heart, that if I find my plan for her more particular happiness can be practised with equity and propriety, I may be authorised to take the measures I have conditionally resolved upon.

I am as impatient as the earl can be to see you, having a considerable deal to consult you upon; but must defer particulars till my return from my northern expedition.

I am, my dear sir, yours, with cordial wishes for your recovery, though I did not formally express my concern for your indisposition,

AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, XIV.

MR. STANLEY, TO SIR CHARLES CONWAY,

Alverston, Sunday morning, March 29th, 1789.

WHAT a phantom is human happiness! how illusive the pursuit of this "shadow of a shade!" It seems to be every where, except the very place in which one is. Seek it—and it is gone. It shrinks from the grasp at the moment we think we are on the point of securing it for ever.

When I was at Alverston, I fancied it was to be found at Bristol. When at Bristol—I was convinced I had left it behind me. I returned—the phantom was vanished, and I now know not where to look for its abode.

The last date of my itinerant letter was Lichfield, in which I deplored the perverse accident that detained me so long at Mr. Webbers. By the bye, after it was gone I was half sorry for having been so severe upon Mrs. Digby; for though what I said was true, I gave it, I must confess, the highest colouring; being at that time, from a reপরusal of your letter, extremely out of humour with her, as it brought fresh into my remembrance the instance which I related.

After I had done writing, I went to Lady Davison's; never recollecting, till I had entered the house, that she was gone to Runcan for change of air. However, I had the satisfaction of hearing she had received benefit from removing her residence.

At five o'clock last evening with an agitated mind, I entered Alverston Park. I fancied every distant figure that I saw was the lovely Maria! but in all, I was mistaken. I much wished to meet and surprise her by a sudden and unexpected appearance, that I might observe the effects, before she had time to be guarded, but being afraid by that means of *too much* surprising my dear mother, I sent Jerry forwards to inform her of my arrival; upon which, both my father and her ladyship came out to meet me and welcome my return. I alighted at their approach. My mother seemed greatly agitated. I hastily enquired the cause of her being so affected; when my father interrupted me with—"my dear George tell us how your engagement stands with Lady Lucinda Harrington?"

Seeing their anxiety, I informed them in four words that it was entirely over.

"How—how?" said my father.

"Over!" repeated my mother, in an exclamatory tone.

Their earnestness surprised me; but to put an end to their suspense, I explicitly told them that Lady Lucinda Harrington had eloped from her guardian's house with his valet; or, as he used to style him, with his gentleman; that their route was to Gretna

Green; that before that time, they probably were married, and that I was returned to their presence with a little purchased wisdom.

At hearing this account, the joy of both my father and mother was extreme; which when we entered the house and were seated in the drawing room, they accounted for by telling me that since I had been gone they had heard such a character of the lady in question as greatly alarmed them, lest I should precipitately have involved myself in an engagement from which I could not recede with honor, when I found, as they supposed I soon should do, her mind unconsonant to my own. We had a great deal of conversation on this subject, and I candidly informed them of every particular which had passed in the course of the event. My sister, it seems, sent a character of Lady Lucinda, “which,” said my mother, “confirmed what Maria Birtles” [I felt myself blush at the mention of her name] “had before intimated.”

Is Lady Lucinda, asked I, known to Maria Birtles?

“With her character,” replied my mother, “she is certainly perfectly acquainted;” adding, that when, at her importunity, the dear girl had given her opinion of the young lady, and found she was likely to be allied to the family, she burst into tears, because (*as her ladyship supposed*) she was apprehensive of having spoken what might create an unfavorable prejudice.

What a blow, Charles, was this upon my senses! Maria knew I was gone in pursuit of Lady Lucinda Harrington! Knowing her as she knew her—how must she despise me for such an attachment! To what inducement could she attribute my design! But she burst into tears at the communication my mother then unguardedly made. And for what!—Not, as the dear lady imagined, because she was apprehensive of having given her concern. NO, Conway; fine as are her susceptibilities—this was not the case. Those tears were shed—I WILL believe so—from the hurt she *herself* received upon the occasion of my supposed attachment.

For a moment this thought pained me most exquisitely; but a hope immediately arose that I should be soon able to convince her my heart was truly hers, though, by a strange concurrence of circumstances, I was led to think my gratitude and even my *compassion* concerned in my journey to Bristol.

I should like, said I, to hear Maria’s account of this young lady. Pray—with seeming indifference—is she at home?

“Ah!” replied my mother, shaking her head, “I have lost the dear girl since you left Alverston.”

Lost her! repeated I, more than half out of breath, and scarce knowing what I said. How? Which way? When?—all command over myself being at that instant entirely gone.

My mother then informed me of her having received a summons to go to London, about four days after I set out for Bristol. To see her father, was the ostensible reason, but it strikes me very forcibly that, some way or other, I was the occasion of her leaving Alverston. The idea was torture to me, but as my mother said she had received a letter from her from London, I turned the conversation (not indeed finding it entertaining) intending shortly, in a careless way, to ask her to let me see it; that by its particular date I might know where to find her, without enquiry; being bent upon pursuing, till I could regain this real charmer.

After supper my father again mentioned "*my sister's waiting-maid*," and gave me a penetrating account of his over-hearing her play upon the library organ in the most harmonious and finished style. He said she likewise accompanied it with her voice, which was one of the most melodious he ever listened to.

But let me break off before my senses are quite bewildered.

Breakfast is ready. I rose early on purpose to write; being unable, last night, to touch a pen.

Mr. Evelyn is to dine with us. He arrived yesterday, but had left the park before I reached home. We are this morning to have a specimen of his talents in the preaching-way.

Half after eleven.

NOW, Charles! am I *indeed* miserable! I am sick—quite sick at heart. The noblest jewel the world can produce has been within my reach, and I have tossed it away—tossed it for ever from my view—and now what have I to do with happiness! That, too, was put into my power; and that likewise I have slighted—slighted for an airy dream of incoherent fiction, till it has fled beyond my power of pursuing.

At breakfast I asked my mother if she had in her pocket the letter she mentioned having received from Maria Birtles, telling her I wanted to see it on account of the elegance of the writing of which she had spoken so highly.

"I believe it is in yonder letter-case," replied my mother, looking at one which lay upon the library writing-table. I arose to seek for it; soon distinguished, and, with her ladyship's permission, opened, and was going, with eagerness, to peruse its contents, when I was, *indeed*, struck with the hand-writing.

Charles, it was indubitably the same as that on the back of my little resemblance!!! Its certainty flashed in one instant upon my soul like electrical fire. I stood mute and transfixed; till recollecting myself, I bowed, without speaking, to my father and mother as I passed to the door, and hurried to my own apartment, where, taking from my escritoir the portrait, I examined, with minuteness, the characters; though

I wanted not any farther proof of *their identity*. Lost in a reverie, I never changed place or posture till my mother's entrance into the room made me start.

"My dear George!" said this tender parent, "what is the occasion of the agitation under which I perceive you still continue? Your father and I are equally alarmed with apprehensions for our son's tranquility."

Madam, said I, without regard to consequences, look at the lines on the back of this little picture. Whose writing is that?

I had, as I told you, acquainted my mother with all the circumstances of my finding the *vellum case*; and she had told them to my father. Treated as my sister and I ever were by our parents, it is no merit in us that we, in return, confide in them, *in most cases*, with the same freedom and unreserve that we would in each other. *In most cases*, I repeat; for conscience reminds me of the carefulness with which I avoided my father's eye whenever the name of Maria Birtles was sounded in his presence, and *you* perhaps will remind me of some other instances of a breach of *entire confidence*. However, in the present case, caution was involuntarily banished—*Whose writing*, said I to my mother, *is that?* At my question, asked I know with a fixed concern, she hastily turned to the table, and looking at the portrait and letter alternately, at last said—It *must* be so. But how"—

That madam, interrupted I, is the question. *How* could the writer of this *letter* drop *that* picture at Hazle-wood Lodge?

"It is possible," answered my mother, "that when she went in the carriage for me"—

And *did* she!—Did Maria go to attend you home from the ball?—abruptly interrupted I.

"She *did*," replied her ladyship: "and when Mr. Mortimer's servant found my earring, she went into the anti-room and sat down on the sofa, while she took from her pocket a little ivory box, and in it carefully deposited the jewel."

Enough, said I; my conviction is complete. But why, madam, did you not sooner tell me this? why did not you insist upon my attending you to the carriage? you ought not to have permitted Mr. Saunders to have usurped my office. All had then been well, and I—

Thus madly did I run on to my dear patiently-attentive mother, till recollection stopped my career and, ashamed of my transport, I threw myself into an armed chair, requesting to be left alone.

"But, George,"—said my mother.

Dear madam leave me—leave me to myself for a few minutes, said I, with earnestness.

She did; saying she must ease my father of his anxiety, as far as that could be done by telling him the cause of my being so suddenly affected, asking my leave to take with her the portrait.

I bowed assent.

When she was gone I recollected that I had not read the letter, therefore eagerly took it up to look for her present abode; but how shall I tell you my distraction upon finding she had carefully concealed it, and had written a kind of farewell! her date simply London.

I immediately thought of applying to Mrs. Douglas for information respecting this angel of a woman, when it occurred that I had read in the papers, a short time back, an account from Weymouth of her death. Who upon earth can give me any intelligence of her! *where* can I think of seeking my dear lost charmer!

Conway I am scarce right in my intellects.

I will enclose a copy of the letter which has distracted me. By that you will see, though it probably escaped my mother, the reason of her “flying with such velocity to London.” I cannot dwell upon it. Allow that the hope which was destroyed was founded, in a belief of my attachment to her and the whole is explicable.

She mentions my sister—She mentions my father; but of me she writes not one syllable! Cruel girl! Inhuman — barbarous—But what do I say! It is *I* who have been inhuman and barbarous to myself and to her. Little cause had she to think that my whole soul was in reality devoted to her, when I went galloping near a hundred and fifty miles after *such* a girl as Lady Lucinda Harrington; with whose character she was so well acquainted. How stupid—how *sordid*, must I appear in her eyes. Distraction! I cannot bear the idea! *Why* did my mother disclose to the dear girl the cause of my *idiotical* journey to Bristol? my mother was blamable in saying any thing about the matter.

But how foolishly I endeavour to throw from myself the conscious reproaches of my own heart! I, and I only, am the culprit; and I am the sufferer.

Maria, dear offended maid! how amply art thou avenged for my undue valuation of thy all-surpassing beauties of both mind and person!

But I will—I *must* tear myself from the subject, or I shall not be fit for any company.

My father and mother are gone to church. I really was not well enough to attend them. It is drawing near the time for their return. Mr. Evelyn will not now think me “*a mad fellow*.” Heavy; dull; stupid, are the epithets I expect he will bestow upon me.

Jerry waits to dress me.

Farewell.

Sunday night.

I have been considerably mortified by appearing in such an unfavorable light to Herbert Evelyn; a character interesting beyond what my ideas could rise to. The moment I saw him he fixed my respect. Charles, we owe you increased obligation for your gift of such a successor to poor Fowler.

Just before our dining time my precious godfather arrived at Alverston, in his return from his journey to town. I wish he was an hundred miles distant. We shall now, I suppose, be often plagued with him, for he has purchased Hazle-wood Lodge, with its furniture, of Mr. Mortimer, who is going to reside in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Manwaring. Tattisford is the name of Mr. Manwaring’s country seat, situated near Salisbury; a distance too great for Mrs. Mortimer, who is exceedingly fond of Mrs. Manwaring, to think of often travelling.

Had I been any thing tolerable, I should have thought the day pleasant enough; for though Mr. Slayton tormented me, as usual, about matrimony, Mr. Evelyn’s most agreeable and friendly manner made amends for the other’s teasing. Last night my godfather slept at Mr. Bellard’s, who told him of my having been at Bristol, and that he heard I was returned; which greatly displeased him, because I did not call upon him in my way home. The old fellow then enquired, with some authority, into the business which carried me to Bristol. To silence at once his importunity, for I knew he would not rest till he was answered, I told I had been upon a matrimonial errand; but that the lady very judiciously preferred her guardian’s valet to me, and therefore took a trip with him to Scotland: for the rest, I must refer him to my father and mother; requesting him to excuse me, as I had promised Mr. Evelyn to attend him in a walk round the park. Herbert and I then left the elders to themselves, and rambled about the distant pleasure-grounds till it was almost dark.

It is impossible to tell you how much pleased I was with my companion. Our conversation was chiefly about you, and your situation with Mrs. Digby. As I expected—her aim is to entrap *you*, Charles. Shall I then be sorry that I have written so freely of her? Will she ever, think you, be Lady Conway? Evelyn seems to hesitate in his answer. Not that he thinks she will be *your choice*, but he is apprehensive of your being so entangled by *her affection*, that, well stocked as you are, in the great qualities of the human mind, you will find it difficult to escape. Write, I beseech you, at large upon this matter as soon as possible.

When Mr. Evelyn and I returned from our walk, my mother, as soon as I entered, took me aside to tell me what had passed between Sir Edward; herself, and my godfather, during my absence. It seems I was no sooner out of sight than he desired an account of the Bristol expedition; expressed some disapprobation, if there was any truth in the tale, at his not having been apprized of it; but supposed the whole to be a fabrication to amuse him. Upon this, my father, to convince him that I was not so averse to matrimony as he always chuses to suppose I am, and telling him it was the suddenness of the matter, with the expectation of soon seeing him, which prevented his having been previously made acquainted with it, informed him of the whole rise of the affair from the circumstance of my finding the picture;—the very strong presumptive proofs that Lady Lucinda Harrington was the delineator—at least the loser—with all the ensuing corroborating circumstances of her thinking favorably of me: that, therefore, I hastily—perhaps too hastily—determined upon going to Bristol; my design, however, being only to get some acquaintance with the lady; to which neither he nor my mother could make any reasonable objection; as, if I liked her, and was accepted, none could lie against either her descent, her connexions or her fortune; and they were sure of his [my godfather's] hearty concurrence.

My father then, without telling him how foolishly I was entrapped by my own precipitancy and Sir Philip's great readiness [which I now do not wonder at] to dispose of his niece, informed him of the young lady's flight with Mr. Chapone; *whose name being George*, was, in some measure, the cause of the supposition, at least corroborated it, that I was favored with her approbation.

I have many times, Conway, been ashamed of having had sufficient vanity to believe so easily this imaginary conquest; yet when all circumstances and incidents are considered, a wiser fellow than myself might have been mis-led. The incidents, it may be said, were very slight ones. True: and so must all incidents be which discover the instant affection of a delicate woman. It must be a gross affair, indeed, which under such circumstances is delivered in plain terms; and were I the object of a predilection, declared without any regard to that modest, hesitating timidity, so bewitching on these occasions, I believe my disgust would be sooner excited than even my compassion; whereas a prepossession in my favor concealed—suppressed—and at length accidentally discovered, would—must—were my heart free and the object amiable—create in my soul a real and ardent affection. I should not be such a pitiful coxcomb as to disesteem and slight a lady's tender regard because it was given me unsought. Far from a generous mind must ever be such senseless ingratitude; therefore as there were some circumstances which favored the idea of her partial opinion of me—such as her seeming to be so disordered at hearing I was expected at the ball as even to faint—occasioned probably by the sudden and, perhaps, unlooked-for appearance of her beloved Chapone (for being, as you may suppose, pretty attentive to the relation, I remember Miss Parker said something about the servants entering the room at that time with a message from Sir Philip) her afterwards admiring so tenderly the name of George; then earnestly begging she might be hurried away, because of her being so discomposed, before the arrival of the Alverston carriage; and these, with other minutiae, *so* corroborated by the seeming certainty of her having dropped the *vellum-case*—an incident constantly upper-most in my remembrance—that I

could not, I even *now* think, act otherwise than I did, consistently with generosity; except I had determinedly given way to my admiration of the dear Maria; but as there was in *that*, some impropriety—in the pursuit of *this*, none—I think I deserve the attribution of some merit for sacrificing my real inclination to prudent and humane considerations; and had I succeeded—and the lady’s predilection and character answered the given account—I should have been extolled to the skies for the delicacy and true generosity of my proceedings.

There, Charles! I think I have got myself off very handsomely. If ever I am called to the bar of justice, I most assuredly will be my own pleader.

With the account which my father gave of this affair, Mr. Slayton seemed quite satisfied. “So, so, so! Well, well! So, so! this is all right; all fair; all right”—was repeated over and over. “I am pleased to find the boy has *some* thoughts of marrying. And I am glad his heart—as I hope it is—is his own. I was afraid—faith I was afraid—But well, well; no fear I hope. All is as it should be, I dare say. George is a good boy, *upon the whole*. But, pray now, who owns this picture? Faith, it is like him” [for my mother, at the beginning of this conversation, had put it into his hand]—“very much like him I think. Aye, I remember the time—I very well remember it—when I myself was bewitched by a picture. But I want to know who did it. To be sure—for this is a woman’s writing at the back; and very pretty writing it is—to be sure it is somebody who is in love with him. I would give fifty guineas to know who did it. Suppose we were to have it advertised! Do you not think the owner would claim it?”

Thus he ran on some time: for though my mother, to strengthen the circumstances from which my credulity respecting Lady Lucinda’s prepossession, arose, showed him the portrait, neither she nor my father thought it proper to acquaint him with the accidental discovery of the morning; therefore gave no particular answer to his querying observations.

When we returned, we found my god-father in a wonderful good humour. He prated incessantly during the whole time of supper, and after that was over, enquired very particularly about my sister; when he was told it is expected she will be home on Tuesday evening, accompanied by Miss Lawson. This enquiry was, I believe, intended as a prelude to his next question, which was, what was become of the fine Madam whom he saw when he was here before, that was her waiting-maid?

My mother told him she left Alverston a few days back.

“And pray,” turning his eye upon me, but addressing himself to her ladyship, “where is she gone to?”

“To London”—was my mother’s reply.

“To what part of London?”

Nobody knew; which he thought was *very* strange.

"Boy," [to me] "cannot *you* tell what is become of this beauty?"

I cannot, sir. But do you then allow her to be handsome?

"Well, and suppose I do! Is that any thing to you?"

It gives me pleasure, sir, when we agree in opinion.

"Then *you* think her a beauty, do you sir?"

You ask the question, my good god-father, as if an affirmative would displease you; but I must answer truly. I *do* think her the handsomest woman I ever saw; and I likewise think her a young woman of great merit.

Charles, I could not, for the soul of me, desist from giving this testimony to the dear creature's excellence: and, upon recollection, I am not sorry that I did; for as neither my father nor my mother could have any reason (save from the discovery of the morning) to suppose I was under any concern about her, my open manner of speaking was the most likely way to quiet any apprehensions which that discovery might have given rise to; and *on their own account* I do not wish them to form any vexing suppositions.

The old Squire looked alarmed, and with his head on one side—"Then, sir, I suppose you know to what place this pretty creature is retired."

I just now told you, sir, *that I did not*, and it is a new thing for any one who knows me to question my veracity.

"Mighty well, sir: mighty well. But you need not be so snappish on the occasion. However, if you don't, you don't, and there's an end of it."

"I think," said my father, "George has lately given some proof that his heart is at liberty."

"Why true," replied the other, "and upon *that* account, as well as from the consideration I before mentioned, I am pleased with the story you have been telling me."

After this, the evening was finished with universal good humour; and could I have had the least probable hope of ever gaining intelligence of my dear enslaver, I should have enjoyed the happiness of those around me.

At present, I know not what to determine upon. Going to London to find, at Mrs. Douglas's house, some of her relatives, and to ask *if they can give any intelligence of MARIA BIRTLES*, is all I can think of. I will therefore take hold of the first plausible pretence for a trip to town; for I have no other resort. To avoid setting afloat any

suspicious, I will wait till I have a seeming call to go up on some other occasion; as it is not long since I declared my intention of not seeing London till the birth-day; and that I should then return as soon as it was over. The house in Grosvenor Square will now soon be completed. Had not the workmen been idle, it might have been done long since; but Jephson says it is now *habitable*. To that I will go; and surely I shall stand *some* chance of finding out *something*, one way or other, by means of the people at Mrs. Douglas's; if the house in which she lived, opposite my father's, be now occupied; and I should think her executors cannot yet have disposed of its furniture.

For the present adieu.

Remember I shall be impatient for some intelligence subsequent to Evelyn's account.

GEORGE STANLEY.

LETTER, XV.

SIR CHARLES CONWAY, TO THE REV.
HERBERT EVELYN.

Yarmouth, March 29th.

SINCE you left me, my dear Evelyn, I have spent three very disagreeable days; and should, in consequence of the occasion, immediately leave Yarmouth, had I not weakly given a promise to stay another fortnight, unless unexpectedly called away by business of consequence.

What will you conjecture respecting my situation with Mrs. Digby, when I tell you that it is her to whom this promise—this extorted promise—has been given! Be not, my friend, under any alarm on my account. Mrs. Digby keeps the same place *in my opinion* which she possessed when you left Yarmouth.

And now for the communication, which friendship demands, of the particulars of my present situation.

Very soon after you were gone, Mrs. Digby sent a card requesting to see you on business of the greatest consequence; desiring you to settle your engagements in such a manner as to enable you to afford her, at least, an hour of your company. This card, which was carelessly folded in a piece of paper unsealed, I made no scruple to take from its cover and peruse, supposing it to be a matter of trifling consequence, but after I had read it, I did not (for her delicacy's sake) wish her to think I was acquainted with her having made the request, therefore covered it with another piece of paper, in which I informed her of your departure *and the occasion of it*; for being persuaded that my conjectures of her seeing you with a favorable eye, were to receive a confirmation in the

desired conversation, I did not judge it right she should have reason to think you had left Yarmouth without paying your respects to her, but on pressing business; not knowing what effect a certainty of her partiality might have on your sentiments and tenderness. I, therefore, informed her that I expected your return as soon as your new engagements would permit. Impressed with the opinion I have mentioned—guess, if you can, the surprise with which I read a letter, received on the evening of the day, directed to myself on a subject so unexpected, that, during my perusal of it, I several times adverted to the direction, to see if my eyes had not deceived me.

Delicacy—generosity—*honor* would have obliged me to have for ever buried the contents of this letter in oblivion, had not Mrs. Digby's unguarded behaviour and her determination to write *to you* on the subject, made it absurd to even attempt concealment. However I do not wish it to transpire from either you or me, but to be hushed on all sides as soon as possible.

Mrs. Digby, in one part of her letter, expressed sentiments of distraction at the idea of my leaving Yarmouth without seeing her; yet anticipated the pleasure she should receive from my visit, in such terms as showed she should construe my going, into a profession of *a consonant regard*; though she previously urged me to hasten, on her account, my departure.

But I cannot, Herbert, enter into the particulars of this very incoherent epistle, which distressed me beyond imagining. She says she has a particular reason for writing to you upon the subject. Probably because she believes you have considerable influence with me, which she hopes to persuade you to exert in her favor.

I am well convinced I need not ask you to forbear the task.

It was some time before I could determine upon what method I ought to pursue. To go, as she first desired, immediately from Yarmouth, and without seeing her, would render me liable to two very disagreeable imputations—either that I was conceitedly afraid of my own powers, and therefore forbore seeing her from motives of compassion; or that I meant to show a silent contempt of her expressions of kindness: both which constructions must have been very humiliating to her. By attending her, I was certain I should inevitably experience a great degree of pain; but I concluded that I ought not to excuse myself on that consideration. It appeared, therefore, as if the only proper mode of conduct would be to make her a visit previous to my leaving the town; at which, all I should have to do would be to endeavour to unite a proper degree of conciliation with firmness.

When thus determined, I wrote her a note, intimating my intention of removing from Yarmouth, but that I would call upon her to take my leave at any time it was agreeable to her to appoint.

From this my whole intention must be obvious, but, by what has followed, I am persuaded she was determined not to see it in a light contrary to her inclinations. Had I been sooner convinced of this, my work would have been easier.

An answer to my note, appointed Saturday evening for my visit. I went, and was received with—But I cannot go through the subject. My firmness was strongly attacked; and had I not been greatly fortified by an undiminished and most invincible affection for a woman of quite a contrary character, my imbecility of mind, upon the occasion, might have led me into still greater inconveniencies than I now am under. In the most respectful manner I acknowledged to Mrs. Digby the situation of my heart; assured her that I was perfectly sensible of the honor of having her good opinion, for which I wished to make all possible return; but that, from my prepossession, a consonant one was not in my power.

I omit giving you *her* part of the conversation, save that she requested me to promise I would not marry within the next twelve months. This I absolutely refused, because I thought it wrong to concede so far, as it might lead her to form conjectures which could never be realized. She then abated in her request, by pressing me to tell her I would not, within twelve months, marry *without giving her some previous information*. To this I objected, likewise; but she appeared so much hurt by my refusing such a trifle, which she said could no way injure me, and might be a means of her reconciling herself to an event—so grievous, she chose to term it,—and asked it with such *wild* earnestness, that not thinking it of any great consequence, I gave her the promise she required; after which, she prevailed upon me for the other, with the mention of which I began my letter. So here I stand—hampered, by weakly yielding to what my judgment tells me I ought to have resisted. On *her* account resisted—if I am to admit the reality of her prepossession.

Never let it be said that the female sex are weak and defenceless. They have arms invincible when they are exerted with prudence and delicacy; such as the bravest hearts and wisest heads must bow before. It is only those undesirable members of society, who are hardened beyond the feelings of humanity, that can withstand their influence.

How Mrs. Digby managed it I cannot tell, but she has not lost either in dignity or delicacy, by the extraordinary step she has taken. On the contrary she has, in my eye, rather raised herself upon the occasion. I believe if I were to give you the whole of her letter, I should exalt her in your opinion; and yet its expressions are so favorable to myself that I cannot submit it to any other's perusal.

Time here seems now to drag heavily. After next Sunday I hope you will, with propriety, be able to leave Alverston for a few weeks.

You are now, Herbert, introduced into one of the best families upon earth. How exquisitely happy have I been at Alverston Park!—a place where I cannot expect ever to meet with happiness again.

I am, as you will perceive, exceedingly low. Mrs. Digby, instead of drawing my ideas *from* Emma Stanley, has caused them to revert to her with increasing liveliness. A needle once touched by a magnet will ever remain steady to its attractive pole; to which it will fly with the same avidity that it resists the other. I need not otherwise explain the state of my heart.

Since I began this, I have had a letter from Mr. Stanley. He probably arrived at Alverston on Saturday night; a circumstance upon which I dwell with pleasure; the idea of your introduction to him affording me peculiar satisfaction. Tell him he shall soon hear from me; and congratulate him in my name upon the very happy turn his affairs have taken; the account of which gave me more relief than any thing I have met with lately.

What shall I say to this friend of my heart respecting Mrs. Digby? To conceal *any thing* from him would be new to me, and would seem a breach of that friendship which has so long cemented our minds. Yet to disclose, *unnecessarily*, such an affair as this, is not quite consistent with my ideas of that honor with which we ought to treat every individual of the gentler sex. But by a hint in his letter, he has, I find, some suspicion of her bias; from—*he says*—a thorough knowledge of her character; upon which subject he tells me he will, some other time, write more at large. Mr. Stanley seems to entertain but very indifferent thoughts of Mrs. Digby. It is possible that a knowledge of the *explicitness* with which she has treated me, may raise his opinion. You will easily come at his sentiments upon this, and indeed upon every subject; for his heart is as open as your own. I therefore leave to your discretion the management of the matter.

For the present, my friend, I will bid you farewell. You will write to me soon; and if you have heard any thing of Miss Stanley, will transmit the intelligence.

CHARLES CONWAY.

LETTER, XVI.

COLONEL GREVILLE, TO LORD FITZMURRAY.

Alverston Park, Monday night, March 30th.

A Curse upon fortune for a jilting jade! Our plan is entirely ruined: at least for the present.

In the first place—George Stanley is returned. *He* therefore would join in pursuit of the girls and spoil my sport, could the seizure be effected, which is impossible, as they were to leave Woodstock this morning, and are expected at Alverston to-morrow evening. Who the plague thought of this little witch's so soon quitting Oxfordshire! I supposed she meant to stay there a considerable time, or our work should have been executed long ago. Had I received the information respecting her return before my journey hither, we might have laid a plan to have intercepted them: but it is now too late to think about that. Would it answer any serviceable purpose, I should execrate till my

pen would be worn to a stump. As it is, I may spare myself the plague of raving about what irritates my very soul. The *skirts* of my plan must now be changed. I will proceed by sap, till another opportunity offers of securing by storm this seemingly impregnable fortress. For a time I will drop the hero, and assume the submissive, though adoring swain. Who knows but time may give me an interest in the affection of my nymph!

I am now stationed at Alverston, and mean to continue here for a considerable period; it being a place always pleasant to me, on account of the distinguished treatment I have received at it, ever since my rescue of the lovely Emma from the soldier's ruthless element: and if I seem, though with reluctance, to give up my pursuit, there cannot be any reason why that friendly treatment should not be continued.

The young parson, who I told you accompanied Sir Charles Conway, is amongst the groupe at the Park. He is come to take possession of the Alverston Rectory. Him I design to make a tool of; whispering in his ear a tale, as if in confidence, though in ambiguous language, respecting a little love affair between Miss Stanley and his most obedient humble servant; which tale he will indubitably convey to his other patron, the Hawthorn-Grove Baronet.

Old Slayton, George Stanley's godfather, from Oakley-Hill, who is to give riches to this already rich family, left the Park this morning. I was not sorry he decamped before I arrived, as I query if he would much approve my union with his fair cousin; because, though I am a *votary*, I am not one of the favorites of his master Plutus; so ungrateful is the monster to my sacrifices.

I can tell you, Lord Fitzmurray, I have difficulties enow before me to excite the spirit of chivalry to action;—difficulties so great, that was not the reward, in view, of a most glorious *shining* quality, a little persuasion would lead me to relinquish the pursuit: but Emma Stanley, *decked with golden ore*, is more than I can forbear.

Let me, my lord, have a letter from you; but order Bridgen to direct it, and seal it with a common head. It must not be known that you and I correspond, as that might be destructive to some future design. Adieu.

Yours, with esteem,
ARCHIBALD GREVILLE.

LETTER, XVII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, Tuesday evening, March 31st.

IN safety, health and spirits, we arrived, my dear Maria, at Alverston Park, about half an hour back, and it is now near eight. I write the first moment I can get opportunity, that my revered friends at Woodstock may, as soon as possible, be eased of their anxiety. Miss Stanley sends more love; *duty* and thanks than I will undertake to convey. Love to you; duty to the mama and aunts, and thanks to all, is, she says, her meaning.

As for *my* heart, Maria—the poor thing is overwhelmed by its own sensibilities. Remember me to all at *dear* Woodstock in a language expressive of the utmost tenderness.

My mother forbids my writing to her; my aunt refuses to hear from me. Both constitute you to be the *Receiver General* of my letters. And why? Because they wish to give pleasure to me and to you; and command as an instance of duty what is, in fact, the highest indulgence.

But how I *lose* time, Maria! Would any mortal woman, except she were as stupid as myself, sit scribbling up-stairs when there are in the drawing-room three smarts of the highest order! First — Mr. Stanley. And indeed, first he is in all companies; though I never before saw him so in-alert. Next, Colonel Greville. Of these two gentlemen you have often heard mention: but the third is a character new to both you and me. The Reverend Herbert Evelyn, distinguishes him by name. A very handsome, sensible young man; perfectly polite and accomplished, and of apparent sweetness of temper, gives him by description. He has been at Yarmouth with Sir Charles Conway, and is now come to receive from Sir Edward Stanley the living of Alverston.

Emma is this instant come up. Her spirits are low. Sir Charles Conway has, probably, been mentioned. His name always affects her. Colonel Greville's presence distresses her too. She owes him gratitude, but he seeks affection. Emma has none to give him.

We found Sir Edward but very so, so. Lady Stanley looks as well as I ever saw her. Emma and I met with a rapturous reception: but I think her brother and she are more ceremonious than usual. All on account of the discontinuance of the engagement between his sister and Sir Charles Conway.

Dear lovely Emma Stanley! How greatly is she to be pitied! Her happiness is entirely destroyed.

But I must, my Maria, bid you farewell.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XVIII.

MR. EVELYN, TO SIR CHARLES CONWAY,

Alverston, Tuesday night, March 31st.

YOUR letter, my dear Sir Charles, has just now reached me; and its contents have very much distressed me, because I know the subject upon which you write has pained you greatly.

Surely Mrs. Digby's proceedings are extremely singular. That she saw—and even *acknowledged she saw*—you were distinguished in the qualities of your mind, shall be attributed to her as a merit; but her *method*—her *manner*—is strikingly particular.

Yet let me suspend my censures. I may be too hasty in forming my opinion.

Her letter to me—for she actually did write, was dated Saturday, yet it reached me but with yours of Sunday. Her style is truly whimsical. When we meet I will show it to you. I must now be brief on this subject, as the servant is just going off with letters to the post.

With respect to matters here—I am at some loss what to say; for though, my dear sir, the greatness of your mind makes a palliation of real truth unnecessary, yet I could wish to be spared giving you any intimations which would raise disagreeable ideas, could I forbear, consistently with the sincerity I owe you.

Mr. Stanley reached Alverston on Saturday; on which night I slept at the Rectory; but on Sunday I was introduced to him, and at once found him to be all that my raised imagination had led me to expect. We were FRIENDS directly. Of him, I need not say any more.

Sir Edward and Lady Stanley are, in my opinion, amongst the most exalted of the human race. Of them likewise, so well are they known to you, this is sufficient. My reception from them, and from the people in general, was such as you predicted. I do not see the least prospect of any difficulty respecting parish affairs.

Mr. Slayton, from Oakley-Hill, came to Alverston on Sunday. He jealously interrogated Mr. Stanley respecting the Maria Birtles whom you wished me to observe with attention. She has left the Park about a fortnight. I have several times heard her name mentioned, and find she stands very high in every one's opinion.

On Monday came Colonel Greville. He is, I observe, distinguished at Alverston, on account of some eminent service afforded by him to Miss Stanley. His complaisance, though he seems, with almost officiousness, to court my acquaintance, does not gratify even my vanity. His mind and mine can never mingle. In an undoubting manner he

speaks of your being soon to be his cousin. That this assertion is advanced to farther his designs, which are professedly directed to Miss Stanley, I cannot absolutely affirm, but such appears to me to be his motive, for so industriously talking upon the subject. Occasionally, I oppose the intimation; but he bows; smiles, and tells me he must beg my pardon, that he perceives I am not in the secret; but that he can affirm, from the first authority, that matters are *en train*.

His assurance absolutely puts me out of countenance; and his assertions are so flat and peremptory, that without an open disclosure of particular circumstances, I cannot, *at present*, contradict him with success. However his *hardiesse* determined me to show your letter to Mr. Stanley: the effect it had upon him you will easily conceive. It was with difficulty he afterwards behaved with politeness to Colonel Greville. Something, he says, very mysterious is, to use his own expression, floating in the air, which he is determined to reach and explore, after a little silent observation. The Colonel has intimated to me, as if in confidence, (yet still as a matter with which he seems to suppose I must have some knowledge) his having made proposals *in form* to the father; mother, and brother of— shall I tell you that he says—*of his Emma?*—giving an idea that the plan was pursued in pre-concert with herself, and that he hoped very soon to be honored with her hand by joint approbation.

This is the sum of a few minutes of accidentally-private conversation: he officiously making such a use of an opportunity afforded by Mr. Stanley's being summoned to attend Sir Edward in his study. We were interrupted by the arrival of company. I have not since been alone with Mr. Stanley, or I should have had his sentiments upon this communication.

There was such an air of mystery in what the Colonel *infused*, that had I not formed an opinion of Miss Stanley quite opposite to such a proceeding, I should have concluded they had long been upon what is called a good understanding with each other; and this floating idea did not *loose* strength from his arrival at Alverston just before Miss Stanley's return; who I have still to tell you, has been for three or four days expected home as this evening.

Now my dear friend, *if there be* any truth in these insinuations; and if, they would have any influence upon your determination—And yet it cannot be that you—But what am I saying! We are such incompetent judges of the fit and unfit—and a person of the most exalted character is (for doubtless great reasons—such as correcting error, and levelling the mental qualities of mankind) so often paired with one less meritorious—that I know not how to fix my judgement; therefore lay before you all particulars, as you then may form and draw your own conjectures and conclusions.

Sir Edward Stanley has insisted upon my residing at the Park till my return to Yarmouth (which, if Mr. Clark can officiate at Alverston for a short time, will probably be next week) but I often walk to the Rectory to set on foot some few necessary arrangements; this worthy baronet having taken upon himself to answer for all delapidations. After tea, this afternoon, Mr. Stanley accompanied me to my new

territories. Colonel Greville chose to stay within; as it appeared, to receive Miss Stanley; who, just before we reached the Park on our return, was driven up the avenue with her friend Miss Lawson, so I saw not the meeting between her and her military admirer; but I afterwards thought she treated him with a kind of *reserved freedom*;—if you can understand opposite words so united—and in spite of the natural liveliness of her temper, evident in her first appearance, I observed at times, a kind of pensiveness inconsistent with meeting a favored lover.

And now my dear Sir Charles, having given you materials which will enable you to form your judgement, I will conclude my letter with expressing most ardent wishes for your enjoying all the happiness this world can afford, as far as it will be consistent with your pursuit of happiness hereafter, subscribing myself

your greatly obliged,

most grateful, and

most affectionate friend,

HERBERT EVELYN.

LETTER, XIX.

MR. MAYNARD, TO MRS. MAYNARD.

Kildwick, March 31st.

MY DEAREST HARRIET,
BEFORE this reaches you, you will, I hope, have received a six-line scribble, dated from Nottingham, to inform you of my safe arrival at that town. I now write from the snug habitation of one of the most respectable and, at the same time, amiable Christian veterans I know amongst the order. I have not been arrived more than two hours, but during that period I have wished for you half a score times, as I know you would find yourself delighted with the inhabitants of this rural dwelling; Miss Broomley being the most charming little country maid I ever saw.

She is very pretty and genteel; and, notwithstanding her garb is not in the London taste, has an air of fashion hanging about her which surprised me. It is fashion in its simplest style; consequently a thousand times more alluring than the finished labours of a courtly belle.

But I must reserve these kind of accounts till I see you.

The good Vicar has so arranged all the particulars necessary to be attended to, that my work here will be trifling. To morrow afternoon, therefore, I hope to set off for

Cumberland, where I shall just look about me and leave Valence to advertise and finish the sale of the whole, if I find the farms are in such order as I expect.

And now for a matter still more immediately relative to the happiness of our Caroline.

I told you I would, by some means or other, either in my going or return, manage if possible, to see Mr. Slayton of Oakley Hill, and endeavour to learn from him the circumstances of Mr. Stanley's supposed pursuit of Lady Lucinda Harrington. Stopping a few minutes at Mansfield, I took up a St. James's Chronicle, in which I saw the account of that young lady's elopement with her guardian's valet. This eased my anxiety on that subject, as it left me to conjecture Mr. Stanley's being at liberty. However, I still wished to have some conversation with this old Squire; therefore finding his house was about two miles from Mansfield, and that it stood pretty near the road, almost upon the top of the hill from whence it takes its name, I walked forward, under pretence of being tired with riding; which, by the bye, was *more* than pretence; ordering the carriage to follow slowly in about an hour. The weather was exceedingly fine, and this walk was really relieving. When I came pretty near the gentleman's habitation, which stood in a kind of park, though it could not properly be called one, being surrounded by a neat clipped hedge, instead of a pale, I sat down upon a stile, from which went a path to the house, where I continued a considerable time without seeing a human creature; but at length I observed a man coming out of a door in the middle of the building, who had in his hand a short telescope, through which he looked, directing it to me. I continued sitting till I saw him advance towards me, and when he was pretty near, arose, crossed the stile, and went to meet him, making first my bow and then my speech.

I believe, sir, you have some curiosity to know the reason of my having sat so long on yonder stile. To which he replied—"Why, sir, I must confess, I was rather surprised to see a person of your appearance in such a situation; and I came to learn the occasion of it, apprehending you might have received a hurt by some accident."

Your humanity, sir, I returned, deserves acknowledgment. But that is not the case. I have travelled several miles in a few hours; have still many more to go, and being tired with riding, I walked from Mansfield up this hill, ordering my servants to follow with the carriage, which I every minute expect.

Mr. Slayton then expressed his wishes that I had walked to his house; giving me an invitation *then* to go, if my regard to time would permit; boasting of being able to amuse me with some tolerable paintings.

I told him painting was a science of which I was a passionate admirer; that, at that period, my time was particularly limited; but that, with his permission, I would call and look at his collection upon my return from the North; whither I was going to transact some business relative to my uncle the Earl of Danvers.

This, as I expected, immediately brought us acquainted. He put on a respectful air; presumed my name was Maynard, and remembered having once had *the honor* of dining with me at the late Lord Rushford's, though he did not, at first, recollect my person.

This was beyond my hopes. I engaged to be his visitor, upon my return; and taking my leave, for the chaise had been some minutes come up, was driven off, extremely well satisfied with this beginning of my negotiation.

Do not, my dear Harriet, expect to hear from me again till my return from Cumberland to this place. My straightest road home would be by Lancaster; Preston; Wigan, &c. but bating my wish to call at Oakley-Hill, I must return this way, as I shall leave the final adjustment of matters with Mrs. Pemberton, till I come back, or I must wait here for the finishing some writings, longer than I else shall have occasion to do. Not but that I really should be very happy to spend a few days with my reverend friend in his tranquil abode, but my impatience to return to London forbids my loitering.

I almost despair of prevailing with Mr. Broomley to carry his Alethea—or even to permit her going—to St. James's Square. However, I shall, by and by, press still more strongly to see them both, either there, or in Hertfordshire.

When I leave Kildwick I must proceed to Skipton, from whence I intend writing to the worthy divine, to communicate Lord Danvers' and Lady Caroline's intention respecting his grand-daughter. I cannot tell him of it, while with him, as I should be hurt at receiving any acknowledgments from a man so much my superior.

My dearest girl, farewell. I am already impatient to see you. "The universe, without my Harriet, would appear to me as a desert." Write to me upon the receipt of this, and direct it to the care of Mr. Broomley, that it may be ready for me at my return; and about two days after, order another to be left till demanded, at the post-office, Mansfield.

Yours, with still encreasing affection,

AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

Be cautious not to let Caroline know any thing of my self-introduction to Mr. Slayton. Her delicacy would take the alarm, and prohibit my proceeding.

LETTER, XX.

POLLY FENTON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

London, Tuesday, March 31st.

MADAM,

I Was once deemed worthy of your notice, and that of Mrs. Stanhope, but I confess I have long since lost all pretensions to that honor. I will not—I need not—enlarge upon the particulars which led to my destruction. You were too well acquainted with them, and with the misery which was the consequence of my deviating from the principles which good Mrs. Stanhope used to endeavour to impress upon my mind, when she permitted my attendance upon you at Hampstead. Had my father and mother treated me with half the tenderness I received from her, I should not, though a stray sheep, have been a lost one. Their severity, for which, when in the depth of wretchedness, I almost execrated their names, drove me from error to guilt; from guilt—to guilt repeated and avowed. Oh! had they fostered; soothed, and healed the wounded soul of the once humble—once returning penitent! how much happier should we all have been Here and Hereafter!—For what can they expect in another world, for having, in this, “bruised the broken reed.”

But, madam, this is not the business of my letter. I am not now, I own, in a repentant mood. Revenge—Revenge to *one* of my guilty partners, by whom I have lately been again abandoned to poverty, stimulates me to an act, which wants but purity of motive to procure me applause.

About nine months back, left in distress, by that agent of the devil’s, Lord Partington, who drew me from innocence and happiness at once, I was glad to accept of a maintenance from Colonel Greville, and lived in lodgings of his procuring, till he very lately, upon a pretence of jealousy, drove me back to penury. While I was under his protection, he transacted all business of consequence at the rooms he had furnished for my reception, where, in a bureau (which stood in a little place called my dressing-closet) he usually deposited all his letters and other papers, because he thought them more secure there than at his lodgings in Pall-Mall, which, when he went into the country, were generally left empty.

Near the latter end of January, at which time Colonel Greville was absent from England, I was sent for by a Mrs. Digby, a relation of his, to go down into Leicestershire, there (assuming the name of Matilda Barlowe) to act the part of a young woman seduced by Sir Charles Conway; about which business I had had a hint given me by the Colonel, previous to his leaving London, with a strict injunction to attend to Mrs. Digby’s instructions. I obeyed, and, from really feeling the force of the truths I was taught to utter, acted my part with success, *as I have since found*; for I was not then made acquainted with the whole of the business: but a short time before this ungrateful man causelessly quarrelled with me, that he might have some pretence to throw me again upon the world

poor and friendless, he heedlessly left, as indeed he frequently did, the key in his bureau, which, at this time, excited my curiosity, and knowing the Colonel was going out of town, not to return till next day, I opened this repository, and observed such and such arched niches were appropriated to such and such business, over which, pieces of paper were affixed with wafers to signify the nature of the writings deposited in each place; for Colonel Greville is a man of business as well as pleasure; though I found in my search that his affairs are in a shattered condition. Over the middle niche, to which was a little door locked up, I saw *Emma Stanley*, which, not knowing the lady by her real name, awakened in me some sentiments of jealousy. I therefore endeavoured to find a key to fit the lock, which at last I did, and examining the contents of the place, found the whole history, which before I was only in part acquainted with, of my journey into Leicestershire; it being all laid open in several long letters from Mrs. Digby and Lord Fitzmurray. I will not tire you, madam, with my sentiments upon what I read; but being desirous to peruse them with attention, I carried them to my chamber, intending to re-place them before Colonel Greville's return, which, however I was prevented doing by his coming back sooner in the morning than I expected, at which time he locked the bureau, and put the key in his pocket. I trembled lest he should miss the letters; till I recollected having re-locked the little door within.

For two days I watched for an opportunity to re-place the papers, knowing he would not pardon what I had done, and I did not chuse to quarrel with him till I had some security for a promised future maintenance; but for the opportunity I wanted, I watched in vain; and on the third day after, he fermented the dispute which occasioned my dismissal. I was ordered to quit my habitation within three hours, which I did; taking with me the letters I had obtained, that I might use them to his confusion. It is now just a week since I left him; during which period I have been very miserable. Sometimes I have had thoughts of endeavouring to get my livelihood in a reputable way; but the door seems shut against me, and repentance banished.

Believe me, madam, I did not, when I began, intend to write in this style. I verily think it is from recollecting the character I am addressing, that some faint compunction seems to arise. Oh! my dear young lady! you do not know—and may you never know—the wretchedness—the deplorable wretchedness of guilt; especially when those are involved in it who once had hope of happiness with innocence.

But to what purpose do I go on thus! Before this reaches you, I, probably, (and cannot help confessing it) shall have lost the ideas which are now awakened.

I will proceed to tell you how it came into my mind to send to you the enclosed packet of letters, which I at first thought of conveying directly to Miss Stanley.

The day after I left my late lodgings, I was seized with a violent rheumatic pain in my face, occasioned by having caught cold, which continued to torment me for four or five days, or I should, before this time, have wreaked my revenge. When I was well enough to write, I began a letter to the lady above-mentioned, who, I had reason to suppose, was then at Woodstock; but recollecting that the time which Lord Fitzmurray

had fixed for the execution of his diabolical plot was near at hand, I was apprehensive that my information might not reach her soon enough to frustrate it, as I had not any certain direction to her, and having heard from Betty Johnson that you were gone with Mrs. Stanhope to live at that place, I had no doubt but that you must know the family of the Lawson's whom Lord Fitzmurray talks about, therefore went to Mrs. Ashby, and begged she would tell me how I must address a letter to you upon urgent business. The good lady hesitated some time, but at length obliged me.

To you therefore, madam, I transmit the whole of this important affair; being assured you will, from better motives than I can boast, find out, and save, if possible, an innocent young lady from destruction.

And now if you could—But I am ashamed to ask it—Yet my necessities are *so* pressing, that if you *could* procure me some trifle—reward I dare not call it—for the service my intelligence may be of, it would be a present relief to an undeserving object, who always admired—though she had not the grace to follow—the precepts she has often heard in your presence.

Any little matter directed to me at Mrs. Burchell's, opposite St. Clement's Church, in the Strand, will be received with gratitude by, madam,
your distressed,

but ever respectful,

humble servant,

MARY FENTON.

LETTER, XXI.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO POLLY FENTON.

Woodstock, first day of fourth month.

I Write to thee, Polly, by my aunt Stanhope's command, which well agreeth with my own inclination, within five minutes after the perusal of thy letter, to invite—to entreat—thy immediately coming to the Lawn in Woodstock, where, my poor unhappy girl! thou wilt be received without one reproach, and continue to be treated with the greatest tenderness by one of the best women in the world.

Hasten, Polly, hasten, instantly, to thy real friends. Thy story here is not known. Fear not that thou shalt ever be reminded of thy past errors with severity. We will endeavour—not to *drive*, but—to *lead* thee into the path from whence thou hast strayed, and thou shalt be as secure of a future provision as the instability of this world can give.

Now is the time. *Now*, that adversity is kindly sent to awaken the bitterness of self-reproach. Stay not till the thorny, though flowery path, be again opened, lest, by once more entering it, thou shouldst lose thyself for ever!

My dear aunt in the first moment of zeal for thy real happiness, was going to send thee a draft upon her banker; but fearing what she intended as a relief, should, by enlivening thy mind, and causing thee to think of gayer scenes, prove thy sure destruction, she suppressed her intention.

If thou hast sufficient money to defray the expences of thy journey hither, delay not thy setting out one hour. If thou art straitened in that respect, carry the enclosed letter to Friend Ashby, and she will supply thee with a sufficiency; but if thou art not in immediate want, bring the letter back to Woodstock, whither thou must come, if it be only to receive the gratuity which I dare promise thee from the generosity of Emma Stanley; who, with her friend Charlotte Lawson, left Woodstock yesterday morning; frustrating, I hope, thereby, the wicked plan of that Greville, and him thou stilest Lord Fitzmurray: but we shall not be quite at ease about them till we hear they are safe arrived at Alverston.

And now, Polly, farewell. In a few days I hope to see thee, when thou shalt be convinced I am still thy friend—thy compassionating friend,

MARIA LEWIS.

LETTER, XXII.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MISS LAWSON.

Woodstock, first day of fourth month.

TO give immediate ease to the anxiety my dear Charlotte will be under upon opening a letter sent by a special messenger from Woodstock, let me hasten to say that our friends here are all well, and that the packet I am ordered to convey by this expeditious method, is more likely to produce felicity, than its contrary, to those highest in thy estimation.

And now let me endeavour to express the surprise—the astonishment—with which we were all seized upon reading the letters which Richard, who is to give thee this, will have to deliver to thee. When I say we, thou wilt understand that I mean thy mother and our two aunts; for as soon as I had written to the young woman, whom, if thou receivest the packet in safety, thou wilt know by the name of Polly Fenton, my aunt and I were driven off to thy house to call a consultation; in which (after expressing our hopes that thou and our dear Emma arrived last evening at the Park in safety; about which we were not very apprehensive, as Richard said he saw you seated in the Alverston carriage before he left you at Coventry yesterday morning) we all agreed in thinking it right to send off a messenger to thee, late as it was, with the information which hath so greatly amazed us, lest Greville and Fitzmurray, disappointed in their original plot, should form some other; and I was ordered up to thy closet to write a few lines, during the time of Richard's getting in readiness for the journey.

We anticipate the sensations thou wilt experience on this occasion; and the dear Emma, and indeed all who are interested in the event, are before us in imagination. But I must not stay to express my sentiments. Let us have a minute account of every circumstance relating to the unfolding this discovery, as thou must suppose the subject will be the chief one, for some time, of our conversation.

Thy prudence, my Charlotte, will have a trial. How thou wilt proceed, I cannot conjecture. We have each of us formed a separate guess, but I will not tell thee what any one's is, lest it should improperly bias thee; and thou who art amongst those most interested, must, as my aunt observeth, be best qualified to know how to act in a case so delicate respecting Emma Stanley.

Dear girl! what pain must she experience before she can enjoy the felicity which will, we all hope, result from this sad—this vile—and hitherto successful contrivance.

My letter is now called for. Richard is ready. He engages to be with thee—no accident intervening—to-morrow evening. By his return we hope to hear thou and Emma are in safety.

Need I say that all here join in the kindest remembrance—in sympathy and in congratulation—

with thy

MARIA LEWIS!

As I know thou wilt not be without anxiety respecting Polly Fenton, I have taken a slight sketch of what I have written to her, to enclose for thy perusal.

LETTER, XXIII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, April 2^d.

I Am all surprise! All confusion! All *amazement*! So pleased! So distressed! So angry! So happy! What shall I do? How shall I manage? Why did not you tell me how to proceed? Why did not my matronly friends send their advice? What *shall* I do? Mr. Stanley is so precipitate, and Colonel Greville is *here*. *Colonel Greville*—vile dissembler—*is at Alverston*, Maria! But that I believe you have gathered from the horrid Fitzmurray's last letter, though I have only just skimmed any of them over. I had not time—I had not patience—to read them deliberately.

If I tell Mr. Stanley — an immediate challenge will be the consequence. Yet sure he would not draw his sword upon *a visiter*! However, I dare not trust him: nor can I first tell my dear Emma. Her delicacy would not permit her to either act or advise. I must unfold the matter gently to Sir Edward and Lady Stanley. But what can *they* do! To be officious in preventing Mrs. Digby's detestable art from succeeding, would seem like inviting Sir Charles Conway's return to their daughter. Well, and what of that! Is not Sir Charles too noble to misconstrue an act of bare rectitude! To be sure he is. I wonder how I could let so false a delicacy one moment prevent my determining to reveal the matter to them. I hope they will not delay writing to Sir Charles. I hope their letter will reach him before it be too late to countermine that Mrs. Digby's dark workings.

With regard to Colonel Greville—What can Sir Edward do about him?

But how I perplex you and myself!

Richard shall go directly back to Swarkston to get some rest. He shall not stay here, lest Emma interrogates him. And what *shall* I say to her about his coming! I must flatly tell her she must not know the business at present. But what a perplexity will that be to such an active mind as hers, which is so greatly interested in all that concerns *me*, as she must suppose something that is going forward does particularly! However I *must* go through with it.

I will now send off Richard, and will soon write again. You need not ask me to be minute in my account of the *process* of this affair. I shall not be able to forbear giving you every particular.

On Tuesday evening I wrote you intelligence of our safe arrival at the Park. You will probably receive that scribble before this reaches Woodstock.

The drawing-room is filled with company who dined here. I shall, I dare say, be abominably absent the whole evening. I believe a dance, after tea, has been proposed. If I can be excused, I will again retire to my pen and ink.

My dear Maria farewell. Dispose of my love and duty.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

Pray ask my mother or aunt to look into my large cabinet and to take from the middle drawer a letter from Emma Stanley dated, as I well remember, the sixteenth of February. It is an account of her dismissal of Sir Charles Conway. Let this be enclosed in your next.

LETTER, XXIV.

COLONEL GREVILLE, TO LORD FITZMURRAY.

Alverston April, 2d, 1789.

YOUR messenger is now arrived. Well may you, as I have done and still do, curse that vile strumpet Fortune. But be comforted. All is not yet lost: on the contrary, we may find ourselves gainers by this present frustration of our enterprise.

I wrote to you on Tuesday evening, when I was most plaguily out of humour. Since that time I have been better, as I think I make considerable progress in my *amour*, and I doubt not but I shall conquer by submission. If my hopes are fallacious, and I mean very soon to try their strength, I shall call upon you to assist in the execution of a project I have been three days in digesting, which will effectually answer both your purpose and mine. For have her I will; or die in the attempt. You know the strength of my determinations, when once they are fixed.

I will just give you a hint of my new intention.

In a week or two, if the baronet's gout be civil—which I shall pray that it may; and of the efficacy of my prayers who ever doubted?—we are to make an excursion to an estate of his honor's which lies along the coast of North Wales. Need I say any more? Will not this hint, to a man so perfect as you are in the science of intrigue, be sufficient?

If this meditated event takes place you shall have due notice, that previous *to execution*, you may come in your seamans habit down to Derby, where we may meet and consult about particulars.

But if my goddess should be kind, and I have great faith in that conjecture, I will furnish out some plan for your amusement. You are, it must be confessed, the most active spirit in England when you are well set to work. What a strange thing, then, it is, that you cannot cut out for yourself. I know you hate to be idle, for which reason I was doubly

sorry for the frustration of the Woodstock business. But never fear—I will soon employ you some way or other.

I fancy the Alverston Parkites universally credit Conway's going to be married to Mrs. Digby, notwithstanding this plaguey parson hints to the contrary; and that idea, probably, smooths Miss Stanley's brow when she looks at me.

This Charlotte Lawson is, I believe, a confounded spirited girl. Her eye is sometimes turned upon me with such a penetrating cast, as if she would dive into the recesses of my heart. Once or twice I have almost thought she was in love with me.

But I must finish. The drawing-room is crowded with beauties. After tea we are to have a dance. Emma Stanley must dance with me.

George is, sometimes, very queer; but I pass it over, *for the present*. The baronet and his lady are still, upon all occasions, *my obliged humble servants*. I have not, you know, had a *negative*—strangely ungrateful if I had—from any one of the family but the girl herself; and to her I shall soon renew my *adresse*, which I think will not now *mortally offend*.

Adieu.

ARCHIBALD GREVILLE.

LETTER, XXV.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, Friday morning.

NOTWITHSTANDING we sat up last night to a very late hour, I arose this morning with the sun, that I might uninterruptedly pursue my subject of yesterday.

Emma is, I believe, still asleep, and I am fearful of making the least noise lest I should disturb her.

I will now give you an account of my first reception of your letter.

We had yesterday, as I told you, a great deal of company to dinner; after which, we walked to the green-house to look at a very beautiful shrub, for which we do not yet know a name, that arrived last week as a present from Captain Sellinger; and as we returned, we observed a man riding pretty fast up the avenue, which I soon perceived to be Richard, and was, consequently, considerably alarmed; therefore hastened to meet him as he alighted, when the faithful creature, seeing my anxiety, immediately told me I need not be frightened, for that all was well at Woodstock; he then gave me your letter, and after that, the packet, with which I hastened to my chamber, and, after skimming the

contents, wrote the incoherent scribble which I gave to Richard, and was just going down with it, to send him off, when Miss Stanley entered the room.

“What, Charlotte,” hastily asked she, “is the matter at Woodstock?”

Nothing, my dear Emma, that is, in any degree, unpleasant.

“But what,” said the dear girl, “occasioned Richard’s coming to Alverston? And what is the cause of the hurry in which I see you?”

Will you, my Emma (smiling in her face) be patient for a short time without my telling you the particulars of the packet I just now received?

“Why, Charlotte, you astonish me. What *can* be going forward that I must not know?”

If I tell you that I expect soon to hear of a wedding, you will still be inquisitive about the parties; especially if I add that they are amongst the number of those in whose happiness I am greatly interested.

“I will be whipped if Rachel be not going to be married.”

Emma be quiet. You must not sift. In a few days you shall know the whole. Ask not one more question, for she was going to speak; I must not yet hear another syllable upon the subject. And down I went, she following me, repeating—“I am all astonishment!”

Having dispatched Richard to Swarkston, I returned to the drawing-room, where, as soon as I entered, Mr. Evelyn, who improves upon me every time I see him, approached me, and led me to a seat in one of the bow windows, placing himself next me, upon which Emma soon joined us, and we entered into a pleasant conversation on the subject of secret-keeping; which, had I not more consequential business in hand, I would amuse you with. At last Emma promised to be very good, and very patient, till I thought it right to develop the mystery—for she had told Mr. Evelyn I was a secret in her debt.

It now, for the first time, occurred that this very gentleman was the most proper person, of all others in the world, to manage the whole of this important affair. To him, therefore, I instantly determined to apply; wondering it had not been my first and immediate resolve. I now cast about how to find an opportunity, and in what manner to begin; when the purposed dance presented itself to my idea, and all in a flutter, without any consideration, and I verily believe, preventing him from making, that instant, the request of me—I exclaimed—O Mr. Evelyn! will you—will you dance with me this evening?

The moment I had spoken, that moment I recollected the seeming impropriety of what I had said, and began to stammer out an apology, by telling him that as

extraordinary as my proceeding might appear, I believed I should be justified when my motive was explained, which — and was going on, when he interrupted me by saying that he thought himself affronted by any apology; as I could only think it necessary to make one, by supposing him so void of penetration as to believe I could say or do any thing inconsistent with the strictest rules of rectitude and delicacy; which in his own justification he must take leave to say, was diametrically opposite to the idea he had, at first seeing me, imbibed, and which, with encreasing conviction, he continued to entertain.

Do you not think that I was pleased with this compliment? I was indeed. I never remember myself to have been so gratified by flattery; for never before did I hear it conveyed with such a grace; or with so much modesty and seeming sincerity.

Now, Maria, do not be ill-natured, and criticise the honesty of my acknowledgements. Surely one may yield due praise to a deserving object without—without. I really do not know what to say to you, because you will think—What am I talking about! I was so earnest in my supposition that you would judge me strictly, that I almost fancied I heard you speak.

Mr. Evelyn—to go on with my story—reconciled me to myself, by assuring me he was just going to solicit *the honor* of my hand for the evening, when I, with such a frankness, as adorned my character, anticipated his intention.

Tea was now brought in; soon after which, country-dances commenced. Miss Stanley was engaged, greatly I saw against her approbation, to Colonel Greville. Mr. Stanley danced with Miss Emmeline Stafford: but he was so very inanimate, that it was not in the power of his agreeable partner to enliven him. How the rest were paired is not of much consequence. We had ten couples.

When Mr. Evelyn went up to me to lead me into the line, I said—I do not wish to dance much, I want to talk to you. However, we must go down once or twice. I will not, Maria, say that he was the best partner I ever danced with, because it will again lead you to criticise. And yet, how can I, good Doctor Griffith! be afraid of the censures of *your little dove*? My gentle friend, I ask your pardon. Forgive me, and *do not* say I was *conscious*.

At the end of the second dance I sat down in a distant part of the room; Mr. Evelyn by me; when without any circumlocution, for I was afraid of its being remarked if I sat long there, I told him every particular of the affair in question.

No expressions of surprise that I ever before observed, exceeded those which, while I was speaking, appeared in Mr. Evelyn's countenance, mixed with an equal share of indignation. He never once interrupted me during the whole of my narrative, which I ended with telling him the reason of my not daring to trust Mr. Stanley upon the occasion.

“Exceedingly right, Miss Lawson—exceedingly considerate. But where shall I find language to speak the surprise—the abhorrence—the *happiness*—which fills my mind upon this discovery. Have you, madam, the letters in your pocket?”

No, Sir: but I will go up for them, and will give them to your servant; who, without any particular appearance, may call you out to deliver them. Do not hasten your return on my account; I will go and sit by the card tables, for I am not much in the humour for dancing; therefore I beg you will read all the letters with attention, beginning with that signed Mary Fenton, that your judgment may have every thing in view.

“Excellent Miss Lawson!”—was all I allowed him time to say, for hastening out of the room, I went up for the letters, gave them to his servant, and returned to the ball-room. He was soon called out, and I went and sat by Lady Stanley; saying to those who enquired for my partner, that he was sent for out upon some business.

In about half an hour he returned. When he entered the room his eyes, darting fire, seemed to seek Colonel Greville; whom, he afterwards told me, he was obliged industriously to avoid speaking to; it being impossible to treat him with common civility.

As soon as Mr. Evelyn could get an opportunity of speaking at large, without particular observation, he said he never before met with an incident which had raised such a variety of passions; that it was impossible for him to convey the least adequate idea of his sentiments upon the letters I had given him. Miss Stanley, from what I had told him of her sentiments and conduct, was, he thought, still more to be pitied than Sir Charles Conway; as he had only to *endure*—she to *inflict* and endure likewise—sufferings of the most acute nature. Persuaded as Miss Stanley was (and as any one must have been by such a train of artful falsehoods) that rectitude required a discontinuance of the engagement between her and Sir Charles, she had acted most nobly indeed; and her character was fixed, in his opinion as one of the first amongst women. With regard to Mrs. Digby—he knew not how to express himself; as the softest language he could use, with any degree of sincerity, would be more harsh than he should wish to deliver in my presence. Against Colonel Greville he was, *if possible*, still more irritated, because of his after-plans. Lord Fitzmurray he knew personally, as well as by his character, which, to speak without ceremony, was that of a fool and a libertine—a mere tool to any one who would set him at work in an intrigue, however vile and hazardous. His description of this wretch made me shudder at recollecting the danger from which my dear Emma and I have so providentially been delivered; for which I hope my heart, and hers, when she is apprized of it, will ever feel truly grateful.

Mr. Evelyn expressed an anxiety for Polly Fenton’s future welfare; and seemed apprehensive she might suffer from Colonel Greville’s vengeance, should he hereafter find out that it was she who had made this discovery; upon which I told him in what manner you had replied to her letter.

And now, Maria, I must desire you not to come to Alverston till my conquest be confirmed, for I very much apprehend your power would be absolute. The difference of

your persuasions would stand me in but little stead; because the liberality in both your hearts is so distinguishable that though each would prefer partners with similar sentiments—However I will not anticipate evil, and rather than appear to be a coward, will *invite* danger by expressing my most ardent wishes that you, my dear girl, may hasten, as soon as Mrs. Stanhope's indisposition will permit, to this enchanting scene, where you will meet with characters similar to those celebrated in the Golden Age.

Do not think, Maria, that by an *enchanting scene*, I mean the illuminated ball-room in which I was last night engaged. Whenever my taste is so vitiated as to prefer (or put in competition) a confined space enlightened by the most heightened brilliancy of wax-candles, and prepared for the reception of even royal birth-night visitors, to a rural prospect gilded by the rays of sun, or by moon, renounce me as a friend; it being impossible to happen whilst my senses continue entire, and my heart uncorrupt.

Mr. Evelyn was visibly affected by my account of Mrs. Stanhope's intention respecting the poor unhappy creature who unfolded this important matter, and by the manner in which that intention was communicated to her; saying that you, however, must not monopolize the merit of providing for her in future.

He then greatly honored me by asking my advice how to proceed. I was pleased; but told him he must be both judge and council, and wished to hear his sentiments; expression my apprehensions of Sir Charles Conway's being entangled by Mrs. Digby.

"*Entangled*, madam, he *may* be—but not in his affection. *That* remains unalienably Miss Stanley's. Peruse this letter, Miss Lawson;" [putting into my hand one he received last Tuesday from Sir Charles] "your judgment—your prudence, may, I am well convinced, be relied upon. Make what use of it you please. Perhaps it will not be an improper prelude to your discovery of the affair to Miss Stanley."—And, Maria! he gave me a letter — *such* a letter! I have no patience to talk about it. *O THAT Mrs. Digby!* It is such designing creatures as she, which brings the artless part of our sex into suspicion. I cannot speak my detestation of Mrs. Digby. As Mr. Evelyn told me I might make what use I pleased of the letter, it cannot be a breach of confidence to copy it for you. I will therefore enclose it. But let it be destroyed, Maria, as soon as it has been read to the venerable three.

Mr. Evelyn was attended to Alverston by a servant of Sir Charles Conway's, who still continues with him; and him he determined to send express to Yarmouth with a letter to his master, in these words.

"*Whatever may* be your engagements, my dear sir, with Mrs. Digby, they must be renounced. The tale I have to unfold would authorise a cessation in even the marriage ceremony, were it began. I will only stay to secure an official for Alverston church next Sunday. As soon as possible after that be done, I mean to be with you. Let me presume to request you not to take any one step relating to Mrs. Digby, till I see you."

To the *purport* of the above—for he *repeated* it to me—did Mr. Evelyn write to Sir Charles, and sent it off, as he afterwards told me, rather before ten, desiring the servant to go on till twelve, and then to get some rest, to enable him to pursue his journey early in the morning.

The reason of his sending so expeditiously is to prevent, if possible, Mrs. Digby from succeeding in any more of her contrivances; as the delay of a few hours, in such a predicament, might be productive of disagreeable — if not of fatal consequences; Sir Charles Conway being distinguished by the *generosity* of his sentiments, and is impressed—for which Mr. Evelyn very much censures his own credulity—with some idea of its being possible that Colonel Greville's address to Miss Stanley may, in time, be successful; which, from what he then thought proper motives, he had intimated in his last letter to the baronet.

How could you, Mr. Evelyn!—I exclaimed, without thinking what I said—How could you—“My dear madam,”—interrupted he—“ought I not—impressed with such an idea—ought I not to have given to my friend—my patron—my benefactor—an intimation of a *probability*, which, if realized, might release, in some measure, the pressure from his spirits? But perhaps I was culpable in imagining the woman so sincerely beloved by Sir Charles Conway, could ever condescend to think of Colonel Greville as a husband.”

I now said all that I thought ought to be acknowledged of my Emma's attachment—unabated, though her opinion was lessened—for Sir Charles; and at length went so far as to promise him a perusal of the letter which, in my last, I requested you to convey to me.

I could not when I wrote, being in haste, tell you why I made this request. My reason arose from an idea that it might be necessary to be produced to justify Miss Stanley's conduct — to *her brother*, more than to any other person. However I told Mr. Evelyn as much of it as I could remember; [which was a pretty deal] especially of that part which adverted to the promise. And here Mr. Evelyn asked me if I thought that promise ought to have been given. I told him I did not; and that Miss Stanley had long since been convinced of her error in that particular, though she could not have the least idea of its having been extorted for bad purposes. But consider, said I, Mr. Evelyn, how the dear girl was led on, and by what art—“I do. I do.” interrupted he. “and allow that under such circumstances her compliance was greatly more to be lamented than blamed. Miss Stanley madam, now the veil that clouded her character is removed, shines in my eye, like a star of the first brilliancy. Every one who sees her must immediately be prepossessed in her favor. Determined as I was against being pleased with her on account of her very reprehensible conduct (as I then thought it) respecting my truly noble friend, I could not shut my eyes to the striking beauties of her person and mind.”

Mr. Evelyn then said several very agreeable things upon the attachment between her and me; which again introduced the name of my little Quaker friend. But I will not tell you all, Maria.

Colonel Greville came next under consideration.

What was to be done with *him!* He had certainly cancelled the obligation that all the Stanleys thought they owed him; but how to proceed without awakening George's resentment before he was gone from Alverston—was the question. It was a point which required some consideration.

We were now called upon to join the dance. When it was finished, Mr. Evelyn again stepped out, returning in a few minutes with a piece of paper which he asked me to peruse, and to tell him if I thought it would be improper to put such a note into Colonel Greville's hands, upon his retiring for the night.

What he had written was as follows—
“A wish to prevent disagreeable consequences, urges me to tell Colonel Greville that several very long letters—the first dated February the seventeenth, the last March the twenty-fourth, subscribed Arabella Digby, and addressed to him—with four or five from Lord Fitzmurray, displaying the whole business of a happily frustrated design, will, it is probable, be read to morrow morning in the library to those most interested in their subject; with one from the person who occasioned their conveyance to Alverston.

What mode of conduct Colonel Greville will think it wisest to pursue, upon this literally true information, I do not pretend to conjecture, though I could advise.”

HERBERT EVELYN.

There was no possible objection to be made to this note. It was therefore fixed for him to receive it at his going to his chamber; and that Mr. Evelyn should go to the Rectory in the morning, leaving the letters with me that I might open the discovery to the family in any manner I judged proper, after Colonel Greville's departure; as it was not to be doubted that he would immediately leave Alverston. Mr. Evelyn, in the mean time, would endeavour to get the church supplied for Sunday, then directly set out for Yarmouth; first sending for the packet of letters to take with him, as he did not wish to see any of the family before he saw Sir Charles Conway; lest Miss Stanley's delicacy should urge his proceeding contrary to his wishes and determination.

This business put in a train—the evening seemed extremely pleasant. We continued dancing till a late hour. I will not say *how* late, lest you should think I am turning rake.

And now I will dress, and then awaken Emma.

Half after eight.

Miss Stanley is up. She has been questioning me about my early rising. What had I been doing—was her enquiry; for I confessed my seeing the sun's first rays.

Thinking about Mrs. Digby, Emma.

By the bye, I forgot to tell you that this Colonel Greville has several times intimated Mrs. Digby was to be Lady Conway, which had filled us with a thousand various conjectures that were the constant subject of our retired conversation. Something there was, we were convinced, strangely mysterious in the affair. But what could we do!

Only wonder in private.

Thinking about Mrs. Digby, Emma, was my reply.

“Oh, Charlotte!” said the dear girl, bursting into tears, “I cannot, I will own, endure the ideas which the mention of her name raises. Never, never,” said she, after a pause, “expect to hear me numbered amongst those whose hearts are truly happy. In resignation *alone*, can I ever know felicity.”

My dear Emma! I still hope to see you blest to the extent of your wishes.

“What do you mean! What bliss—what happiness—Ah Charlotte!”

Well, it strongly dwells in my mind that you will at last be Lady Conway.

“How can you speak thus lightly upon a subject which so greatly—too greatly—distresses me! Indeed Miss Lawson”—

Miss Lawson, Emma! Take back Miss Lawson, and I will tell you a tale. *Mrs. Digby* will never be Lady Conway; depend upon it.

“*What do you mean, Charlotte? What can you mean thus to raise alarms, which, though they tend to nothing, greatly disturb my spirits. Most sincerely do I wish to lose every remembrance of Sir Charles Conway: yet—fool that I am—I take a pleasure, though it is a melancholy one, in mentioning his name.*”

Sir Charles, too, is melancholy, Emma; at least if there be any truth in what he writes to his friend — [taking from my pocket his letter to Mr. Evelyn.]

Emma hastily rising and blushing a deep crimson—“For goodness sake, Charlotte, what—what letter is that?”

If you will promise, said I, with a smile, not to be *very* angry with either the writer or the written-to, I will, as I want to finish my dress, leave it in your hands for perusal, expecting, when I come back, your sentiments upon it at large: and laying the letter upon the dressing-table, I left her; thinking it would be best for her to read it entirely by herself.

And now I must again attend her; and as this scribble is of a tolerable length, I will here finish it; subscribing myself, ever fervently
yours,

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

Tell my mother I wrote to my sister on Wednesday.

LETTER, XXVI.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Friday evening.

WHAT a busy morning have I passed! Till now I have not had leisure to write one syllable.

But to piece my narrative—

Just as I finished my last sheet, Miss Stanley's maid came to attend me. I did not want her assistance, but wishing to hear something of Colonel Greville, I detained her, and asked her if the gentlemen were assembled in the library for breakfast—that being the room in which the day at Alverston is usually began.

She told me Sir Edward and Mr. Stanley had just met there; but that Mr. Evelyn breakfasted at the Rectory, and that Colonel Greville was gone.

Gone, said I, where to?

“Gone home, madam,” said little Betty—“gone quite away; and Jonas said he thought he seemed as if he was not sober this morning, for he was in a terrible passion, and *had liked* to have knocked his own man down all along.”

But for what reason, asked I, did he abuse his servant?

“No-body knows, madam,” replied she; “for the man said he never saw him in such a way before. And he *swore*—dear my heart! how he did swear! We heard him, madam, up into the housekeeper's room before five o'clock.”

I was quite satisfied with the intelligence I had gained, respecting Colonel Greville, of whom I hope I shall never hereafter hear mention. There is no reason to fear his return to Alverston. He has, I dare say, taken his last leave of the Park and its inhabitants. What a mortification must the wretch have endured!

When I had dismissed Betty, I returned to Miss Stanley, whom I found in a *deep reverie*. At seeing me, she started and burst into tears. I sat down beside her, and she leaned her head upon my bosom; sighing most heavily.

Why this, my dear Emma! said I. Why *so much* agitated by Sir Charles's letter to his friend?

Emma. Oh, Charlotte, my heart is bursting. You know not—you know not—what I endure.

Charlotte. Be comforted, my dear girl. All will, I hope, be well. All will, I hope, *soon* be well.

Emma. Illude me not, Charlotte. Give me not *false* support.—But what a woman is Mrs. Digby! How can *she* justify to herself—Charlotte what a mystery is here!

Charlotte. Shall I solve it, Emma?—[smiling in her face.]

Emma. What! How? [greatly alarmed.] Tell me—tell me if you have any thing to say.

Charlotte. I have a letter, my lovely friend, [almost as much agitated as herself] which will, I hope, be the means of your coming happiness. Shall I leave it with you, or shall I read the contents?

Emma. I cannot read—I cannot hear it read. Dear Charlotte tell me all at once.

Charlotte. Shall I then whisper it to you, that Sir Charles Conway never deceived you?

Emma. Oh Charlotte!

Charlotte. He never did, I dare aver. Guard yourself against the effects of surprise, when you hear that the whole tale of the Matilda Barlowe, whose real name is Polly Fenton, was a fabrication of Mrs. Digby's, to induce you to break your engagement with Sir Charles Conway, that she might secure him to herself.

The dear Emma clasped her hands, and lifted up her streaming eyes to Heaven, but never spoke for several minutes; till at length—"Heavens and Earth!—And is it possible!—But, Charlotte, *are you sure?*"

Charlotte. Very sure, my dear. I have it under her own hand; though not with her knowledge.

Emma. What then have I done!!! *Oh!* Charlotte! [deeply sighing] I cannot bear my own ideas. *What must Sir Charles Conway think of me!*

Charlotte. Sir Charles, my dear Emma, will soon be apprized of the whole. The tale is long: the circumstances many. When you are composed, every particular shall be laid before you.

Emma. I cannot doubt; yet I can scarce believe. You say you are VERY sure.

Charlotte. I am indeed.

Emma. Well, then—But, Oh! my heart is tortured. *When* will Sir Charles know—!

She could say no more; but looked with impatience for my reply.

I told her that by to-morrow evening he would doubtless be informed of every circumstance.

“*To-morrow evening!*”—she faintly repeated, and lifting up the hand I held not, turned still paler, and sunk lifeless into my arms. In a few minutes, however, she recovered, when, without ringing for assistance, I conveyed her to the bed, and laid her upon it; sitting down by its side. I then told her as many of the *heads* of the story as were necessary to relieve her *wonder*; after which, she requested to be left by herself, and believing she would then be best alone, I complied, upon her promise to ring for some chocolate during the time of breakfasting below; which, fortunately for the circumstances, was this morning much later than common; Lady Stanley being rather fatigued by having sat up last night so long beyond her accustomed hour: however, when I went into the library, I found she had been waiting some little time, with Sir Edward and Mr. Stanley, for the rest of the party.

The usual salutations over, Emma was enquired for.

Miss Stanley, said I, begs permission to breakfast in her own apartment.

“Is not Emma well?” asked Sir Edward, with concern.

As well as can be expected, I think, returned I; smiling with a meaning he did not then understand, but, doubtless, supposed I alluded to the preceding evening’s *pleasurable fatigues*.

Mr. Evelyn and Colonel Greville were then called for. Mr. Evelyn was gone to the Rectory; the Colonel *rode out*—was the report: no one, I imagine, chusing to give in the account of his frenzical departure.

After a few minutes of indifferent conversation, I addressed myself to Mr. Stanley.

I think, sir, you have seen the letter which Mr. Evelyn received this week from Sir Charles Conway.

Mr. Stanley, [with some surprise.] I have, Miss Lawson; and by your manner of speaking, so I suppose have you.

Charlotte. I have; and for a particular reason must request your reading it to Sir Edward and Lady Stanley. [Laying it before him.]

They all looked at me with earnestness.

Proceed; said I. Let Mrs. Digby be introduced.

When you read this letter, a copy of which I will enclose, you will readily conjecture the sentiments it must have occasioned. Mr. Stanley stormed. Sir Edward and her Ladyship were greatly affected, especially by that part which more immediately related to their Emma.

Spare your exclamations, said I to George. You will presently fancy you have a still stronger demand for them. I then gave him Mrs. Digby's letter to Colonel Greville, dated February the seventeenth, but to tell you the execrations he made use of—the storms into which he was thrown during the reading of it—sometimes rising and crossing the room with long and hasty steps; then stamping and vowing revenge upon the heads of these vile actors—would swell my letter beyond all bounds; and be, moreover, a repetition of such violent language as neither you nor I could bear to write or peruse. Lady Stanley once or twice called upon him to be moderate; but Sir Edward—admirable—excellent as he is—was almost transported beyond his guard. *Execrable!—diabolical!*—escaped him once or twice while George was reading; who did not stop at any of these *simple* expressions.

The first letter was, I suppose, began early in the day; the second, which relates the dear Emma's distress, dated "Late—very late, Tuesday night," was more than even Lady Stanley could support. She sat determinedly attentive till she burst into a flood of tears, and Mr. Stanley's task was suspended. Upon recollection, I cannot forbear smiling at the whimsicalness of George's agitation. He execrated and whistled—both in the height of passion—alternately. Then said he would be perfectly calm; and for a few minutes was so; till meeting with fresh aggravation, he again gave vent to his fury.

When at Lady Stanley's request, he laid down, for a short time, the letter he was reading, I stepped up to Emma, whom I found very languid and low; but as much composed as I could expect. Upon my telling her how we had been employed in the library, she begged me to return, and not to go any more to her till the whole was ended. I then, wishing her to see every thing by degrees, gave her your letter to me; Polly Fenton's to you; your reply, and mine to you of this morning; all which I thought it best she should peruse at her leisure.

I now returned to the library, when (having satisfied the anxious enquirers about their Emma, whom they wished not to see till after they had all circumstances before them; and assured them they need not fear any interruption from Colonel Greville) the business of reading re-commenced, and Mrs. Digby's second letter finished, but not without many a hearty imprecation from Mr. Stanley; who, though in the presence of his father and mother, swore most valiantly. They both endeavoured to moderate him; but to no purpose. The matter was beyond his endurance.

The third letter, with the whimsical date of—“*Wednesday morning, I am ashamed to say how early,*” and beginning with—“What can either lead or drive a woman so fast as inclination?”—made Mrs. Digby appear still more detestable; as it heightened our ideas of her natural endowments, while it showed her application of them to the very worst of purposes. Her's is the most hateful character upon the face of the globe. Yet, Maria, this woman has a face that would charm a stoic, and is not more than twenty-three or four. Where can she so early—But if I once begin to animadvert, adieu to narrative; for my sentiments are exuberant indeed.

The fabrication of the Matilda-Barlowe tale, was surely beyond any thing of its kind ever heard before.

What to make of her frequent confessions of compunction, I know not. Some times they appear to proceed from the force of truth; at other times, it seems as if she acknowledged, only to have an opportunity of drawing excuses. Not that she was afraid of the censure of her associate; for she needed not to have made herself appear so bad as she did; but *her pride in her art* is vastly superior to any idea she has of rectitude. She would not suppress the relation of any little *contrivance*, though she must at the same time, evince the sacrifice of every thing valuable in executing it. On *some* occasions her conscience *was* I believe, rather troublesome; and she was obliged to apply sophistical arguments as opiates.

The fourth letter is dated February the twenty-first.

"Sing! Rejoice! Triumph!"—its singular beginning. I mention their dates and first lines, as I go along, that, if you remember any thing of the letters, your ideas may keep pace with our employment and present our sensations.

This letter is a very vile one indeed. Her expressions respecting Mr. Digby, who was it seems, a very excellent and an amiable man, made such hard words rise to my lips, as I found it difficult to suppress.

The two or three single-sheet letters upon this abominable woman's first going to Yarmouth, are not of much consequence but that dated March the twenty-fourth which she begins with saying *she was acting the part of a sick woman*, is one of the most extraordinary compositions I ever saw upon any subject. I hope there is not Mrs. Digby's counterpart to be met with under a female semblance.

We now adverted to the letters of that Fitzmurray; all written upon one subject and in one style: the same unvarying string of oaths and impudence. I think he is as great a fool as libertine. His last letter is a display of the most abominable scheme that ever a villainous heart contrived. What destruction was designed for both Emma and myself! I tremble to think of the nearness of its execution. To that protecting power ever watchful for the safety of poor defenceless mortals, our preservation from this dreadful evil must be solely acknowledged.

These letters done—I again stepped up to Emma for those I left for her perusal. She was greatly affected by the explanation she gathered from Polly Fenton's; for I had not unfolded to her half the story; fearing to overwhelm her by telling her too much at once. However she permitted my going down again with the letters she had just perused; all of which, except mine to you, I put into Mr. Stanley's hands, and after he had read, and we had together *digested the contents* (in no very unfavorable way to *you* Maria) I told this anxious party what Mr. Evelyn had done and intended to do, respecting Colonel Greville and Sir Charles Conway, which met with their entire approbation; and they all, even our impatient George, thought it best for them not to see Mr. Evelyn previous to his going to Yarmouth; though had the delicacy of his sister permitted, Mr. Stanley would eagerly have posted directly to that place himself.

At this juncture I received a note from Mr. Evelyn, to tell me he could not set off till after dinner, being obliged to wait the return of a messenger from Rowden, who was gone there with a letter to a clergyman, whom he had before engaged to officiate at Alverston the Sunday *after* next, and during his absence. He now wrote to solicit his coming *next* Sunday, as he was unexpectedly summoned away by business of consequence.

Mr. Evelyn desired me not to hurry over the perusal of the letters with the family, as he would send again for them before his going.

This note I gave to Mr. Stanley. He read it aloud, and it gave general satisfaction; but George now fell with such unrestrainable violence upon Colonel Greville as really frightened us.

He threatened to pursue him to the Antipodes, should he flee thither, to take vengeance. It was a long time before he could be brought to moderation; but at length, by a mixture of entreaty and command, he did promise not to take any one step in the affair till Sir Charles Conway's return to Hawthorn Grove.

They all now wished to see their Emma, to whom I went up to prepare for their visit, soon after which, Lady Stanley entered the apartment, and with eyes sparkling with pleasure, congratulated the dear, trembling, blushing girl upon the recent discovery, and herself upon her child's preservation; not forgetting *my* danger and escape; bidding us both be grateful to Him to whom all gratitude is due.

My beloved friend threw herself into her mother's arms, and, with her head upon her bosom, sobbed out her request for pardon, for having given a promise of secrecy which excluded her from her confidence; adding—"I have paid—I have dearly paid"—

"Say nothing, my beloved Emma, interrupted this tender mother, "on that head. I do not mean to warp your judgement by telling you I *approve* your promise; but though it is not meritorious, it is extenuable; and if the confession will give you any satisfaction, I will freely acknowledge that, under the same circumstances, I think I should have fallen into the same error."

Emma was pouring out her gratitude for her mother's condescension when Sir Edward and Mr. Stanley entered the room. The father, with the greatest tenderness, repeated his lady's sentiments; pressed his lovely daughter to his breast with fervency, and, with a countenance of encreased vivacity, bid her look forward to happiness.

Positively, Maria, if Lady Stanley were to leave this world, Sir Edward, were he to sue for my favor, would distance all competitors.

"Parson and all, Charlotte?"

I tell you, child, he would distance *them all*. What then signifies singling out *one* for exception!

As to George—he was so boisterous, I thought he would have hugged poor Emma to death. She was again his sister—his beloved sister: and if it had not been for that vile!—And here he began to swear again most outrageously; begging us not to stop him, as his heart, if he must not speak, would boil over with madness.

The morning was now far advanced. They, therefore, left Emma and me to ourselves; when, after she was a little composed, I began to read to her the letters of Mrs. Digby, thinking it necessary she should be acquainted with every particular; but she was so much affected, that I was obliged to desist. I then prevailed upon her to rest again upon the bed, by the side of which I have ever since sat writing, during which time she has scarce spoken ten words; but she now seems revived, and is talking of getting up and dressing herself for dinner. I, likewise, must endeavour to make some little amendment in my appearance, but will first write a note to Mr. Evelyn, with the packet of letters, to tell him I have made the discovery general, and that Miss Stanley is very much indisposed, but better than she was two hours back.

Emma's delicacy was considerably pained when she read the promise I had given my clerical friend, of shewing him the letter she had written to me upon her dismissal of Sir Charles Conway. Indeed I was not aware of that circumstance when I put my scribble into her hand: and, upon recollection, there were several trifling matters with which she should not *at present* have been made acquainted.

However I have appeased her by arguments superior to the mere forms of delicacy.

And now, my dear Maria, it is, I think, high time to end this very long epistle.

I do not mean to write again till something of consequence occurs respecting this interesting business.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XXVII.

COLONEL GREVILLE, TO LORD FITZMURRAY.

Pall-Mall, Friday evening.

WHAT language shall I use to express the whirlwind by which my soul is agitated!

No fury in Bedlam can feel more raging torments than I do at this moment.

May the confusion and distraction which tear me to pieces, seize upon the hearts of my enemies.

Some agent of Lucifer's has conveyed my letters from you and Mrs. Digby, which disclose the whole of my past, present and future designs upon Emma Stanley, to Alverston—a curse upon his or her head, be it whom it may—and I was obliged to fly like a culprit (at the intimation of a puppy of a parson) from the faces of the inhabitants of the Park; though had my power equalled my will, I would have staid till I had seen them all extirpated from existence.

Nothing short of witchcraft has been used upon this cursed occasion! O! I could execrate the perpetrators till I lost my breath, could I thereby blast their souls to nonentity! Who to suspect I know not, or every wretch within the compass of suspicion should feel my vengeance.

The letters were in my bureau at the lodgings late Polly Fenton's; at which, since she left the place, I have more than once transacted business; not having had leisure to remove the papers, some of them of consequence, which I used to deposit there. I should immediately have suspected her to have been the criminal, did I not recollect [I think I am not mistaken] having had recourse to these very letters the day after I dismissed her. Yet mother Hornsby strongly affirms that there has not been one soul within the rooms since she left them, but myself. If it *does* appear—or if I only come at one suspicious circumstance—that this revengeful strumpet *has done this deed*, I will most assuredly hurl her headlong to endless perdition: she shall not, by all that is sacred, have time for one repentant sigh.

Friday midnight.

Since writing the foregoing, I have been to look for the wretch above-mentioned, but cannot find her. She occupied a miserable garret at old mother Burchel's, that fink of viciousness, for some days, where she was, or pretended to be, very ill; but this morning went away in a hackney coach with all her cargo of trumpery; paying, it seems, all she owed, having somewhere or other picked up a handful of money. This old brute says, that madam had a letter carried to her by the post-man yesterday, which set her to crying most bitterly, and that, soon after, she went out and came back with the pelf.

What the plague can all this mean! But let her go and be cursed! Criminal or not criminal in *this* case—my comfort is, that she will soon rot or starve in some polluted den. Mrs. Digby too, which is another faint relief, will experience some kindred tortures.

As to myself—Before you receive this, I shall be off—out of the kingdom. I have been with Bullen, and have taken up as much money as the remains of my estate could procure; for which the dog would have a bond and judgment. So the rest of my creditors may go to the devil, and I wish he may pay some of them with interest.

Do you think that I, who have been company for the first men in England, will stay in the paltry island to be, in all likelihood, a subject for a newspaper, and the standing topic of scandal amongst *titled courtesans*, who used to boast of my having escorted them, and would, if I had succeeded, though they had known the means, have extolled me to the skies!

No: Archibald Greville dares—and will dare—to do heroic deeds, but he will not be made the hero in a fall; though another Milton should arise to immortalize his name.

I go: and if ever I return to my native country, it shall be in a situation to buy a smile for all that has passed, from every face but the now hated crew in Derbyshire. Destruction seize them all! If they feel but half the torments which my soul at this moment endures, I shall be well revenged.

My fortune ruined—my reputation destroyed—my prospects blasted!—

What have I to do with existence!!!

LETTER, XXVIII.

MR. EVELYN, TO MISS LAWSON.

Yarmouth, April 4th.

I Did not reach this place, my dear madam, till half after four, when I found my friend in anxious expectation of my arrival. My note had alarmed him, and his alarm awakened mine, as it led me to apprehend he was more deeply entangled by the arts of this Mrs. Digby than when he wrote to Alverston; but I was happily mistaken; it arose from the generosity of his nature; lest, as my note might lead him to apprehend, he should hear she had been guilty of some atrocious crime; but of what kind he did not attempt to form the least conjecture.

“What, my dear Herbert,” asked Sir Charles, as soon as we were seated, “can this unhappy woman have done to occasion this extraordinary proceeding?”

She has done a deed, said I, which, though cognizable by the laws of England, cannot, by them, be sufficiently punished.

Sir Charles looked amazed and attentive; but spoke not. I therefore proceeded to acquaint him with the whole affair; from the first to the last circumstance.

To endeavour, my dear Miss Lawson, to convey to you an idea of his looks—his manner—would only mark my poverty of expression. I cannot even repeat, to do justice to it, his language upon this occasion.

The man: the Christian: the lover; were alternately distinguished; and the three characters—each throwing a lustre upon the others—shone with resplendence in Sir Charles Conway. But when I had given, from your words, an account of Miss Stanley’s sentiments and conduct; and when he had perused all the letters I brought with me — the LOVER stepped forward; but without eclipsing the brightness of either of the other characters: nay, if possible, it exalted them, as it assisted to extinguish resentment; for the sense of the injury was almost lost in the idea of succeeding felicity.

For a short time, I left my patron—my friend—to digest the intelligence I had brought him. When I returned, I saw in his then more collected countenance that his ideas were arranged; for the judgment of Sir Charles is quick; strong, and active. By the heightened vivacity of his eyes, it was easy to imagine the probability of ensuing happiness had been a subject of his contemplation; for the prospect of which, I doubt not but this CHRISTIAN had given his thanks where alone they are greatly due.

We now talked the whole affair over with some degree of calmness. Polly Fenton; Colonel Greville; Mrs. Digby, and Lord Fitzmurry—begging pardon of the first for putting her into such company—were all restricted upon, respectively; and it was agreed

that of Mrs. Digby no notice should be taken till to-morrow; when, towards evening, I am to make her my last visit, and give her a short but full intimation of what has occurred.

Do you know, Miss Lawson, that I have so much malevolence in my temper as to lead me to accept, with some degree of pleasure, this commission? She *ought* to be punished, and the utmost which can be inflicted upon her, *except her own heart turns accuser*, will be greatly inadequate to her deserts. I do not remember ever to have been more angry with any body than I am with Mrs. Digby. Yet, as I have said, at times I feel a rising pity; which, however, I endeavour to suppress.

On Monday morning early we mean to take leave of Yarmouth, and expect to reach Hawthorn Grove in the evening. Need I say that Sir Charles Conway hopes to be received at Alverston Park the morning following!

I mean, madam, to keep on writing occasionally till we arrive at our destined harbour; to carry the scrawl with me, and to send it to you with the information of our arrival, that Miss Stanley may be informed of every interesting circumstance.

Saturday night.

We have had a visiter, my dear madam. Who but *Mrs. Digby*, just at the close of evening, should be driven up to the door! This, it seems, is the first time of her venturing out since she took it upon her to "*act the part of a sick woman*." What character she is now preparing to appear in, will not, perhaps, be known.

A servant came in with a request from Mrs. Digby to speak to Sir Charles Conway. For a moment we were both in a consternation. My friend however, with a presence of mind almost peculiar to himself, stepped to the door, and asked her commands, which, to his great astonishment, were that he would engage to join a party she had formed to go to Lowestoff on Monday morning.

"You shall hear from me to-morrow, madam"—he said: "At present, I am particularly engaged. Mr. Evelyn is with me, and we are upon business of consequence."

"Is Mr. Evelyn returned to Yarmouth?" asked she, with seeming surprize.

"He is, madam."

"And when am I to see him?"

"To-morrow evening, if you will not then be otherwise engaged."

"Certainly I will not. But I hope I shall see you with him."

Sir Charles only bowed, and she went on with—"Well, well; do as you like about that. I want much to talk with Mr. Evelyn."

She smiled; bowed, and ordered the postillion to drive forward.

Mrs. Digby means, I presume, to favor me with her confidence personally. I must not think too much upon the bitter disappointment she will suffer, lest my pity undermines my fortitude; a considerable deal of which will, I begin to think, be necessary in the execution of my commission.

Sunday evening.

After sending an excuse to Mrs. Digby for not being able to wait upon her at tea, I am now preparing myself to attend her; not without some reviving inclination to compassionate what her feelings must be when, to perform Sir Charles's promise, I shall have informed her that business *does* call him from Yarmouth, and that he probably will be married to Miss Stanley long before the time she stipulated: her treachery having been fully discovered.

Sunday night.

My task is ended. And glad am I that it is not again to be performed. Never before, my dear Miss Lawson, did I execute such an office. I cannot attempt to give you a description of what passed. My respect for your sex makes me wish to forget the language I have heard from Mrs. Digby. When I first met her, my resentment was greatly softened by the consideration of what she was going to endure, and after the first salutations—preventing her beginning the subject of her letter—I opened, with all the tenderness I am master of, my commission.

At first, she sat aghast with astonishment and apprehension; but no sooner did I hint, in a manner she could not misunderstand, that Sir Charles Conway was in possession of her late letters to Colonel Greville, than she broke out into the most outrageous fury that ever was heard or read of.

For a considerable time I endeavoured to soften her sense of this discovery; but all in vain: her ravings—her execrations—increased; and I was obliged to leave her to the care of her women, in a paroxysm of rage I could not stay to behold, and wish ever to forget; for which reason, and to spare you the very shocking description, I will finally close the subject.

Let me repeat that as soon as we arrive at Hawthorn Grove, I mean to dispatch this letter to you. Permit me to request the favor of a reply by the messenger I shall send to Alverston. Sir Charles Conway declines writing to any one. I believe no pen, not even his own, could do justice to his sentiments and sensations upon this occasion. He talks of meeting *Mr. Stanley*, after this interruption to their mutual happiness, with a fervency I cannot describe. How then could I do any justice to the language he uses, when he talks of his Emma!

Who, my dear Miss Lawson, would not wish to experience such pure—such exalted felicity, as in all probability will soon fall to the lot of Miss Stanley and Sir Charles Conway! That young lady is, in my opinion, greatly raised above the generality of her sex: but she is not absolutely without an equal. Sir Charles, too, stands nearly alone: yet even he, *in the sincerity and ardency of his affection*, may be equalled, likewise.

But I am adding to a letter of an already sufficient length. Excuse, my dear madam, all my imperfections, and believe me sincere in subscribing myself

your greatly admiring,

and respectful humble servant,

HERBERT EVELYN.

LETTER, XXIX.

MRS. DIGBY, TO COLONEL GREVILLE.

Yarmouth, Sunday, midnight.

IF there are plagues never yet heard of amongst mankind—may they be poured, in torrents, upon thy accursed head! May tortures, unconceived by the human race, surround and fix themselves, in the midst of thy heart—thy guilty heart—for ever! What does not thy treachery deserve! Frustrated, I suppose in thine own schemes, thou—devil-like—hast betrayed thine associate, lest she should be more successful than thyself; for to no other motive can I attribute—nor any other way account for—thy delivering up my letters written to thee, thou execrable wretch! in the strictest confidence.

O! mayest thou go on sinning till repentance will be too late; and then, convinced of those tremendous truths thou hast hitherto endeavoured to disbelieve, may remorse—bitter, soul-harrowing remorse—seize thy despairing heart! May thy death-bed be a scene of terror to thyself and to all around thee! May thy torments upon it, be so dire as to make thee wish to be delivered from it, though thou shouldst know assuredly that the next step would lead thee to endless perdition.

I go—I fly from the face of all who used to call themselves my friends. I go—I care not whither. Friends—Fortune—Reputation I value not one straw. England I despise, and all its inhabitants.—It is *my love*—the dear *interest of my heart*, that I so heavily lament. An interest to which *thy sordid soul* will ever remain a stranger. But I will not gratify the malevolence of thy savage breast by a description of my wretchedness; and lest, by increasing to an insupportable weight of woe, it should (driving me to madness) urge me to free my soul from its prison, and thou, therefrom, by any contingency, become benefited, I will to-morrow morning send for a lawyer to make, as secure as words can bind it, my will in favor (greatly as I have hated her for what is called her goodness) of my sister; and in case of *her* dying without heirs, and intestate, to another Branch; which will effectually secure it from thee, thou wretch! for ever. And this I tell thee to blast thy every hope, as thou hast cut off mine. With my last breath, Greville, I shall curse thee, and if after this life be ended, the greatly wished-for blessing of annihilation shall be refused, and my soul consigned to the Fathomless Abyss—I shall be sensible of a relish, though in the midst of torments, from seeing thee sink still deeper into destruction.

ARABELLA DIGBY.

LETTER, XXX.

MRS. DIGBY, TO MISS HOWARD.

Monday morning, two o'clock.

THIS day I leave Yarmouth, and as soon as possible—the kingdom. I shall send you authority to manage my estates, and, if I die, to inherit them. I believe you will not wish for my death from this information. Yet I should for yours, were our situations changed.

Upon second thoughts, I will not send you this, till the deeds and the will be ready; for I do not choose to receive any remonstrance. When I want money I will draw upon you.

As you have always treated me with some regard, I ought not to finish abruptly; and without pretending to an abundance of affection, I can truly say that I am as much yours, as any one's existing.

ARABELLA DIGBY.

LETTER, XXXI.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, Monday morning six o'clock.

AGAIN up with the sun, Maria, that I may oblige you by scribbling about our goings-on at the Park. Saturday and yesterday I was too much taken up with my dear Emma, to give any time to writing.

As soon as I had finished my letter of Friday, and made a little renovation in my dress, we were summoned to dinner, and were received, by the party below, with looks of pleasure. Before Emma went down, her countenance was pale, but as soon as she met the smiles of her friends, her eyes sparkled, and the roses flushed in her cheeks. It had been agreed upon that the subject of the morning was not to be revived in the dining room; but it obtruded itself as soon as the servants were withdrawn. Indeed every ones heart was filled with it; and it would have been affectation to have introduced any other topic of conversation.

Mr. Stanley's impatient temper broke the restraint, and Mrs. Digby was the theme of his discourse. Colonel Greville—bad as his part has been—bore no competition with that famous—*in-famous*—heroine. It seems she was always a professed Free-thinker, and prided herself in her liberty of sentiment. Miss Howard, her sister, is said to have taken great pains to furnish her mind with good principles; but hitherto, in vain: the poison of libertinism was early imbibed. She was her father's darling, and he was a man without

any ideas of either religion or morality, whose only wish was to have his Arabella a fine lady; therefore sent her to France to be educated.

But why do I spend my time in talking about Mrs. Digby?

Friday afternoon was throughout a very agreeable one. Every countenance was expressive of happiness. Yet, at times, I thought Mr. Stanley was pensive, and I have, upon several occasions, had an idea of his having formed some attachment which he is unwilling to acknowledge.

As to Lady Lucinda Harrington—his heart had nothing to do in that business. He was decoyed by a belief—But I cannot now tell you the story; having far better subjects at hand. You have seen in the papers an account of the young lady's elopement with a servant of her guardian's.

With respect to the cause of Mr. Stanley's diminished vivacity—I have a kind of a rumbling notion about the very extraordinary young woman of whom Emma talked so often when she was at Woodstock, and about whom Lady Stanley wrote such an interesting account. Since I have been at Alverston I have frequently heard her mentioned, and always with the greatest respect; but I have thought when George was present, Lady Stanley has rather avoided the subject. If it *has* been continued after his entrance, he has always expressed the most unbounded admiration of her. In her person, it seems, she is beautiful beyond imagination, and her mind is said to be equal to her appearance. Maria Birtles, you remember, is her name.

Once or twice, since my suspicion was first awakened, I have watched Mr. Stanley whenever she has been brought upon the carpet, and I have always observed that his natural brilliancy of eye, and vivacity of countenance, has been instantly heightened, and that he has dwelt upon her praises with evident pleasure. The family are all under concern at not knowing where she is; wishing to entreat her to make a *visit* to Alverston.

The other day, as I was walking with Mr. Stanley upon the terrace, I carelessly asked him if Maria Birtles had the appearance of a gentlewoman.

“Of a gentlewoman!”—repeated he in accents of surprise. “Heavens and earth! madam—But I ask your pardon. You never saw her. Of a *gentlewoman!*—why no. Of something above mortality. It is impossible, Miss Lawson, to give you, by description, the least idea of either her face; her person, or her mind. They are exactly answerable to each other; and, altogether, scarce to be equalled; certainly not to be excelled.”

As he spoke, his face was in a glow. I did not notice it, but turned the subject; nor yet did I mention it to Emma; as it would probably have occasioned her some pain; either on Maria's account, or on her brother's.

But to revert—Friday was passed extremely pleasantly. On Saturday morning we had a long ramble; dined without company, and spent the evening very cheerfully. You

may suppose the late important discovery was a chief subject when we met; and you will likewise easily imagine that Emma and I made it our *only* one when we were retired. Her apprehension of seeing Sir Charles Conway, and her surmises of what must have been his opinion of her conduct, some times greatly distress her.

I have continually forgotten to tell you, that I have several times been charged with the most grateful acknowledgments of every individual of this family for your considerate; kind, and speedy management of this discovery. I am likewise bid to request Mrs. Stanhope will fix Polly Fenton in any situation her prudence shall judge to be most conducive to her reformation, without stopping at any expense; and to bring Lady Stanley in sole debtor. This her ladyship earnestly entreats may not be denied: and indeed I must urge a compliance with her proposal, as I think a refusal will render her quite unhappy.

I ought to have began with telling you, and thanking you for it, that I received your packet, with Emma's letter to me enclosed, last evening. The pleasure you are all so kind as to express on perusal of my unconnected—and I sometimes think *unintelligible*—accounts of matters here, gives me great happiness; as to contribute to the amusement of friends so dear to me—But shall I, Maria, make any professions of love and duty? No: I will not degrade the sense I have of both, by thinking professions necessary.

I thank my aunt for her two lines at the bottom. But do, dear madam, tell me your secret. I am quite impatient to know what can have happened since I left Woodstock "*in which, when I know it, I shall feel myself so interested.*" I could conjecture twenty things, were I to begin to puzzle myself; but I will endeavour to rest till the next packet arrives, which will, I hope, satisfy my curiosity.

Pray return the most affectionate remembrance of Miss Stanley and myself, with the addition of real reverence, to good Doctor Griffith. Emma, who begins to be as saucy as she used to be, before Mrs. Digby's vile machinations took effect, says she expects that either you or I will soon have to do homage to him as uncle; except my mother thinks it proper to give her girls a new father. She adds that she shall envy the lucky one whom he distinguishes with his preference.

A summons to breakfast prevents my continuance. I will resume my employment as soon as I have an opportunity.

Monday night.

Well, Maria! Sir Charles Conway is arrived at Hawthorn Grove!

About nine o'clock, just as we had finished a little concert of vocal and instrumental music in the library, a servant brought me a letter from Mr. Evelyn, which I will inclose. You will there see particulars. He likewise returned me those of Mrs. Digby; Fitzmurray, &c. I was called out of the room to receive them. The servant brought compliments from Sir Charles and Mr. Evelyn to all the family.

As soon as I had slightly looked over that to me, I returned and gave it to Mr. Stanley, whispering Emma to prepare to hear news.

“Is Sir Charles come?” asked she with quickness.

To Hawthorn Grove, said I; and, probably, will come to Alverston to-morrow.

“Oh! Charlotte!”

And Oh! Emma!—What is the matter pray?

She was going to chide me, when she was called upon by Mr. Stanley to attend to Mr. Evelyn’s letter.

Not one word did she speak during its perusal, though George often interrupted his reading by his exclamations. Miss Stanley sat all the time, by my side, upon the sofa, with her head leaned upon my shoulder.

When it was finished, every one spoke in praise of the writer; and all, but Emma (who I am sure *thought* deeply) in language of gratitude of the discovery. But without being aware of it, I came in for a share of Mr. Stanley’s smartness.

“Pray, Charlotte, said he, “to whom does the divine allude when he intimates that my sister *may* have a compeer? and that the ardency of Sir Charles’s affection may be equalled? Who, I wonder, had he then in his idea!”

Maria, I was struck all of a heap. Neither when I read the letter, nor when I heard it from Mr. Stanley, did that passage strike me so *very* forcibly as it has done upon re-perusal. I cannot tell you how I seemed at being so attacked.

“Upon my word, Miss Charlotte,” continued the teasing creature, “the game seems to be all in your own hands. You have done a great deal of business in a very short period.”

I really could scarce stand his raillery. What, I wonder, made me seem so much like a simpleton! But it was so unexpected. However, thanks to his eccentricity, he interrupted himself by hastily rising and ringing for his servant, whom he ordered to get his horses ready immediately.

“Why, George,” asked Lady Stanley, “whither are you going?”

“Whither am I going, Madam! Why to Hawthorn Grove to be sure.”

“To-night, child!”

“Indeed I am. I would not sleep at Alverston for five hundred guineas. Emma, what say *you*? Shall I, or shall I not go to Hawthorn Grove to-night?”

“The morning, surely, would be time enough,” replied the blushing girl.

“Now for that piece of affectation of yours, sister,” returned he, “could I find it in my heart to go and keep Sir Charles this week from Alverston.”

“George is right in his intention of going to Hawthorn Grove,” said Sir Edward; “and I rather wonder, my dear Henrietta, at your not expecting it.”

“Father and son against me—! said she, “it is time to call back and confess that I spoke without due consideration. Emma, my dear, acknowledge with me that your brother *ought* to go to-night: I am sure Charlotte will support the same opinion.”

Indeed I will, said I.

“Or,” joined in Mr. Stanley, “may the young Rector find himself disappointed in his ideas of equality.”

The horses were now ready. George prepared to go; telling his sister that the baronet; the parson, and himself, would breakfast at Alverston in the morning; but to this she seriously objected, requesting they might not come before eleven o’clock; to which, after a little altercation, he agreed. When he left the room, I followed him, desiring him to convey to Mr. Evelyn Emma’s letter to me, on the occasion of her breaking with Sir Charles; enclosing it in a cover wherein I wrote the following.

Miss Lawson transmits to Mr. Evelyn Miss Stanley’s letter; not because she thinks there is now any occasion for its appearance, but because her word, that he should see it, has been given.

I would not thank him for the minute intelligence his letter conveyed to Alverston, because I would not seem to be officious in taking the obligation to myself; as in that case—

Ah Maria!—“But I know my own heart for all that.”

After George was gone, and supper over, I proposed to Emma that she should then read, or hear read, the letters which Mr. Evelyn had returned, as she was still a stranger to the minutiae of *that Mrs. Digby’s* manoeuvring, and likewise to the *particulars* of the horrid plot of Colonel Greville and Lord Fitzmurray; for she had been so extremely weak, that we thought it right not to enter too deeply into the affecting subjects before; but as she has to-day been considerably better, I (for several reasons) wished her to be thoroughly acquainted with every circumstance, before her first interview with Sir Charles. My strongest motive for the motion was, that she might know how far he had been made acquainted with the affection she had evidently showed upon

his supposed detection, and which was most strikingly painted by Mrs. Digby; I was fearful she might permit the high sense she always entertained of female delicacy, to lead her to such a *dis*-acknowledging manner as, after what he had read, must appear like an affectation unworthy *her* character and *his* merits.

Lady Stanley seconded my proposal, and Sir Edward voted for my reading aloud the whole packet. I immediately complied, and the dear Emma was almost over-powered by what she heard. Colonel Greville's part shocked her extremely, and she returned audible thanks to Heaven for our preservation; but Mrs. Digby's hateful, vile art, agitated her still more than Colonel Greville's. In many parts I was obliged to suspend my reading; so extremely affected was Emma at the repetition of scenes which originally very greatly distressed her; and at Mrs. Digby's representation of the effect of her own detestable manoeuvrings.

We sat some time talking over the particulars, and when the rest of the party retired to bed, I sat down to my pen and ink.

I think Miss Stanley is asleep, for she has not lately spoken to me. Her last words were — “Charlotte, convey my remembrance of Woodstock in the most affectionate language your heart can furnish you with.”

I best obey her by giving her words a simple repetition.

Tuesday morning.

Again up early; but Emma will not permit me to write. She requires all my attention. I never before saw her in such a flutter; nor I think scarce ever remember her to look so pretty. There is a timidity—an apprehensiveness—in her countenance, which becomes her exceedingly. If I attempt to move out of her sight she instantly begs me not to leave her.

Tuesday noon.

The meeting is over. Sir Charles Conway has been here some time.

Take the particulars.

We breakfasted this morning about nine o'clock, after which, Emma and I went into the little drawing-room, where we sat talking on very interesting subjects till near eleven; both in anxious expectation of the striking of the clock, which, however, we did not hear that hour, for about ten minutes before, Sir Charles, Mr. Evelyn, and Mr. Stanley alighted at the outward gate. They were conducted into the library, where they were received by Sir Edward and Lady Stanley (as her ladyship afterwards told me) with a joy beyond expressing. As soon as the salutations were over, Lady Stanley went into the drawing-room.

“My dear girl—my Emma!—Sir Charles Conway waits—”

“If—If you please, madam”—hesitatingly interrupted Emma; scarce knowing what she said.

Lady Stanley withdrew, and in half a minute the door gave way to Sir Charles.

We arose at his entrance. He instantly hastened to my lovely, blushing friend, and caught her in his arms, or I verily believe she could not have stood up. I never in my life before saw her so destitute of presence of mind. Sir Charles perceiving how much she was affected, seated her upon the sofa, between himself and me. For some moments they neither of them could speak. At length—

“My dearest girl — ! my ever lovely Emma—! what exquisite happiness has this day led me to experience! I cannot express half the transport which surrounds my heart at the reception I meet with at Alverston.”

He paused. She deeply sighed, but still was silent; while a sweet confusion played upon her face, and prevented her lifting her eye up to his.

Sir Charles continued—“But tell me—let me not flatter myself—am I *indeed* welcome *here?*”—gently pressing her with a mixture of tenderness and respect to his bosom.

I have since thought that he needed not to have asked the question, as Emma’s every look and manner evinced an affirmative; which Sir Charles’s enraptured countenance as expressively showed he understood. But he would not permit the sense he had of her silent language to appear, lest it should pain her delicacy.

Sir Charles Conway, Maria, stands in the foremost rank of sublunary beings. For elegance of face and figure; for dignity, yet sweetness of manners, I never beheld his equal; and his native vivacity (almost perhaps as great as Mr. Stanley’s) is so happily blended with—or rather bounded by, a *generous discretion* (to use a new term to express ideas almost *unconveyable*) that every one who sees, and hears him speak, is obliged to love him.

“Am I *indeed* welcome here?”—was his last question to Miss Stanley.

She attempted to look at him, but could not; and her words were hardly articulate when she replied—“*Indeed you are.*”

The eyes of Sir Charles darted transport, and he was going I thought to bend his knee, when she, endeavouring to assume courage, continued — “but can you, Sir Charles, forgive me?”

“Can I forgive *my Emma!*” he exclaimed. “Let the question be reversed, and say that *you* can pardon *me*. It was *I*, madam, who was culpable: I deservedly suffered—And what did I not suffer!—for believing you *could* act with caprice. I ought to have been

convinced there was some latent cause which would have justified—which would have *more* than justified you, for what appeared to us an extraordinary proceeding; and under that conviction I should, through the medium of your friends, have investigated your motives; for being conscious—excuse the seeming vanity of the assertion—that I did not merit your displeasure, I ought to have *suspected* some hidden mystery: *therefore* it is, that I solicit your forgiveness, and own myself to have been justly punished.”

The dear Emma was now a little more courageous; the force of her consciousness lessening as Sir Charles avowed his; and she thanked him for endeavouring to excuse her to herself.

“I just now, madam,” said he, “mentioned your being *more* than justified. What” [with a smile he spoke] must be my sentence if, on this occasion, I applaud your magnanimity? Shall I, my Emma,”—holding one of her hands between his, and fixing his eyes upon her face—“shall I dare to suppose there was any exertion of resolution?”

“I will be satisfied,” replied she—a smile and a blush contending for distinction—“with justification, without being ambitious of praises which, perhaps, I do not merit.”

Hold, my dear friend!—joined in your Charlotte—you are too modest: the most meritorious action of your life shall not pass without its due applause, as the true greatness of mind which carried you through the arduous task—

“My dear Charlotte!” — interrupted she—“what do you mean? You surely would not—”

“Miss Lawson,” said Sir Charles, “my obligations to you are beyond my acknowledgment. There *is* a way—But of that not now. At present I will only thank you for setting in my view the *merits* of my Emma. The contemplation of them upon *any* subject is pleasant, but upon this, most particularly so indeed.”

“Upon my word I shall chide you, Charlotte,” said Emma. “I did not think”—

You will excuse me, my dear, said I, rising from the sofa, that I do not chuse to stay for a chiding-lecture; and making my courtesy, I hastened out of the room before she was well aware of my intention.

I had watched, Maria, for a plausible pretence to make my exit, as it was against my inclination that I complied with Emma’s entreaty to be present when Sir Charles was first introduced. I was convinced *she* would not find herself under any restraint from my being with her; but I was apprehensive he might think it necessary to treat her with a more distant respect (after such a cessation of their engagement) in the presence of a third person, than if he had been admitted to her alone.

When I left the room, I chose to go upstairs, rather than into the library; as I did not wish it to be observed that I thought it necessary to leave Sir Charles and Emma by

themselves; therefore sat myself down to my pen; and now, having brought you to this period, will go and see what is doing below stairs.

But, Maria, I hope you are perfectly sensible of the obligation of my writing *at such a time*. I hope you consider—Yet I shall have you think that I suppose—What *do* you think? Tell me. And I will tell you—if you are right.

Emma is now come up. She pretends to chide because I left the drawing-room. How ungrateful some people are for favours received! You must know, Maria, the lady in question is impertinently peeping over my shoulder; being afraid I should tell you—but let me whisper that—what is literally true. That is to say, that happiness shines out from every feature of her face; that she is in reality very much obliged to me for so *cleverly* finding a pretence to leave her with Sir Charles; as I am convinced—[do not deny it, Emma]—that the conversation took a still more tender turn after my departure. I rather think—but this, likewise, must be whispered—that her justice prevailed over her *dignity*; and that she condescended more explicitly to ask Sir Charles's pardon for having believed—strong as the circumstances seemed—any tale to his prejudice.

She raves at me for this. But I will go on for all that, and tell you, in whisper the third, that I believe her pardon has been sealed on condition of her *submitting—a most terrible punishment!*—to be Lady Conway within

What a gipsy! At the word within, she arrested my hand, and forcibly took away my pen; nor would she restore it, but upon condition that I would promise not—at *this* time, mind ye—to add another syllable upon the subject.

The reason is—I *will* write that—that she is impatient to go down stairs, and cannot decently make her appearance in the circle without my attendance.

And here she raves again.

Rave on, my lass, and welcome. I now have you *under hatches*, and will bind you over to your good behaviour.

Tuesday night.

What a delightful day, my dear friends, have we spent at Alverston Park! Your own hearts can assist the idea, or I should despair of conveying to you any picture of the general felicity now reigning in this “Mansion of peace.”

Mr. Stanley, who is most fervently attached to both his sister and his friend, goes whistling and singing about as if his happiness was too great for expression; yet, sometimes, I fancy I see the cloud stealing over his countenance; but the moment he finds he is observed, he endeavours to brighten up; resuming his usual gaiety. This revolution

in his face and manners has taken place at least half a dozen times this afternoon and evening.

Just after supper, a servant returned from Derby with letters and newspapers. In the General Evening Post was an account of Lady Lucinda Harrington [now Chapone]—of her journey to and from Scotland; of her interview with her guardian, &c. This naturally led to some circumstances that passed during Mr. Stanley's stay in Bristol, upon which I rather rallied him, when he took from his pocket-book a piece of paper, and, presenting it to me, asked me to accept it as his apology. Every body else being engaged when this conversation passed, I read what he had given me, and found the inducements, at large, of his pursuit. The circumstance of his finding a miniature portrait of himself, was the first misleader; as he had great reason to believe Lady Lucinda was the partial delineator. His tenderness, therefore; his *compassion* was engaged; and from pure—But upon consideration I will send Mr. Stanley's paper to you; as Emma, if she observed his giving it to me, may perhaps ask me about it, and some part of it would, I am sure, make her considerably uneasy; as it is obvious that his heart was very tenderly and strongly attached to some body [Maria Birtles, beyond doubt] whom he left behind; evinced by his boasting the merit of the *sacrifice* he made to an imaginary propriety; humanity, and justice; saying, that the conflict with himself—But you will see the whole, and will think it best to have it sent out of Emma's reach.

Let me return to the supper-room, and take my leave of the party.

Miss Stanley continued a little pensive through the evening; but she is positively handsomer than ever. Her pensiveness greatly becomes her.

Sir Charles Conway, as I have often said, is one of the finest figures I ever beheld. Mr. Stanley may, by some people, be thought to equal him. And perhaps he does; but it is in so different a way that they bear no comparison.

“Any other handsome man in the room, Charlotte?”

O yes, Maria. Sir Edward Stanley—as my mother will tell you—is a very fine man of his years.

“And pray, Charlotte—”

And pray, Maria, do not ask me any more questions. I think I have already given you a sufficient account—male and female—of our beauties. But if you are not satisfied, take the whole at once—We are all handsome—all very handsome—And there is an end of the subject.

When I shall be able to write again, I know not. To-morrow we are to go to Litchfield, to welcome the return of Lady Davison; who is to come back much sooner than she intended, and greatly amended. It is a long journey to Litchfield; but we are to set out early in the morning, that we may be able to come back in the evening. Our

vehicles are to be Sir Edward's post-coach with six, and the chaise with four horses. The coach is the most commodious one I ever saw; the seats being circular, which gives ample room for three persons upon each. There are windows entirely round it, and the divisions between them so small, that when they are all let down, it appears like an open carriage with a canopy. Before it—not very near the windows—is fixed, occasionally, a small low seat, for a coachman; but this is not often used; it being generally driven by three postillions. This carriage is to be devoted to Emma; myself; Sir Charles Conway; Mr. Evelyn, and George: Sir Edward and Lady Stanley chusing to go in the chaise.

If we return to-morrow evening, we are to spend Thursday at Hawthorn Grove. The proposal was Sir Edward's, and readily assented to by all the party: by Sir Charles, with a *lively* pleasure; by Emma with a silent one and a blush. After this, it is intended we should go to Hazle-wood Lodge, a seat lately purchased by Mr. Slayton, which is a very romantic neat place upon the skirts of a pretty little village. We are to stay there a day or two, for the purpose of taking some diversion in fishing. From thence, there is a talk of our going a round by Matlock; Buxton, &c. and home by Oakley-Hill, the residence of Mr. Slayton, which is near Mansfield; though Sir Edward rather wishes to go there first, and take him with us; but this remains to be settled. Mr. Stanley is not, I believe, very fond of his godfather's company, as he is always tormenting him about matrimony. Lady Stanley has been writing to Mr. Slayton an account of the recent discovery.

In the tour above mentioned, we are to have some led horses, that the gentlemen may, at pleasure, change their mode of travelling. When I first came, there was some talk of a journey into Wales; but Sir Edward, though he is now pretty well recovered, does not wish to go so far from home, for fear of a relapse.

And now, my dear, Maria, farewell. I have written myself sleepy.

If I do not find a letter from you, upon our return to-morrow evening, I shall be greatly disappointed.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

Wednesday morning.

We are just setting off for Litchfield.

I unseal my letter to tell you that our plan is altered. We go to-morrow to Oakley Hill instead of Hawthorn Grove; Sir Edward having received a letter upon business which makes him wish to see Mr. Slayton.

LETTER, XXXII.

MR. MAYNARD, TO MRS. MAYNARD.

Kildwick, Tuesday night, April 7th.

AFTER a week's absence, longer by two days than I expected, am I again safely arrived at the serene residence of my truly reverend friend, who received me with the utmost cordiality. The lovely Alethea, too, came forward with looks of animation; and both expressed the most grateful sense of Lord Danvers' and Lady Caroline's *intended* return for what this too singularly great and good man termed a bare performance of his duty. The word *intended*, let me repeat and remark upon; for Mr. Broomley objects—and that almost peremptorily—to his grand-daughter's accepting what he calls an enormous donation. He says, unbounded generosity on one side should, and shall, be limited by moderation on the other: and he looked so grave when he spoke, that I hastily quitted the subject, lest he should insist on my promise not to press the matter any farther; which, however, I am determined shall be adjusted according to the original proposal.

I found every thing here in readiness for final settlement; and in little more than an hour we finished the whole of the business with Mrs. Pemberton; whose appearance, let me observe, is not very prepossessing. I take her to be a very artful woman. She lamented her own weakness, and reviled Lord Crumpford in terms of *exaggerated* detestation. The good divine is perfectly right in keeping Miss Broomley from too much of her company.

You have, I hope, my dear Harriet, received my two letters—the one dated Kildwick, March the thirty-first, the other, Penrith, April the fourth. I confess I was greatly disappointed at not finding one from you directed, according to my request, to Mr. Broomley's care. I hope you are well. I hope nothing disagreeable prevents—But avaunt unpleasing conjectures! I will depend upon meeting with one at Mansfield.

Taking it for granted you have received both mine, you have, I presume, summoned Lord Danvers from his Woodstock cottage, to consult with his lawyer about the vile Tomkins; than whom, there does not, I believe, exist a more complete scoundrel. What greatly vexes me is, that I shall be obliged to go down again into Cumberland, as soon as possible after I shall have received from his lordship proper authority to proceed. If Mr. Robinson has not made a wrong calculation, Tomkins will be obliged to refund between four and five thousand pounds.

I arrived at Kildwick just as Mr. and Miss Broomley were rising from dinner; having myself taken an early one at Skipton, that I might not put them to any inconvenience by coming, at such a time of the day, unexpectedly. Early in the morning I mean to pursue my journey, intending to reach Mr. Slayton's by five or six in the evening; and, if I find him at home, to stay two or three hours as occasion requires, on pretence of viewing the paintings of which he boasted; and to sleep at Mansfield; where, if I do not meet with a letter from you, the rest of my journey will not be very pleasant.

Ever yours,

AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, XXXIII.

MRS. MAYNARD, TO AUGUSTUS MAYNARD, ESQ.

London, Wednesday morning, April the 8th.

THE post-man has this instant brought me your two letters: one written at Kildwick, March the thirty-first; the other at Penrith, April the fourth. By the date of the first, I ought to have received it last week; and the second should have reached me yesterday. I cannot imagine what has occasioned such a delay, which has done me considerable injury, as I have, for the last three or four days, been extremely anxious about your safety and welfare. Thank Heaven I am now relieved. Your Nottingham note came duly.

I will not attempt writing to you at Kildwick, as in all probability you will again have left the place before any scribble from me can reach it; but I hope this will meet you at Mansfield. On second thoughts I will address a few lines to Mr. Broomley, that if any accident detains you with him, *your* apprehensions may, likewise be relieved; as I fear you will be alarmed at not hearing from me according to your directions; which idea half as much disquiets me as did my not duly receiving your letters.

What simpletons we women are to render ourselves liable to these frights and fancies! When I was Miss Pelham, what, foolish girl as I was! had I to disturb me! Nothing; but a very cross mother; a covetous father; two peevish aunts, and a severe governess; and yet—not knowing when I was well off—I must add to my torments a *husband*, who so totally engrosses every moment of my thoughts, that my poor parrot and Pompey are entirely neglected.

But ah! my dear Augustus! I am richly repaid for all my anxiety by knowing that I am the sole object of your tenderest concern. To mother, and father; aunts; governess; parrot, and Pompey I bid a willing adieu.

And now to the subject of your letters.

That of the earliest date delights me from its first to its last sentence. Your account of the Broomleys charms me. Some time or other, I must and will see the little maid of Kildwick, though it costs me a Yorkshire journey.

But Mr. Slayton is the burden of my song. Manage cleverly with him, and I will compound for numberless blunders in any other business. The public account of Lady Lucinda Harrington's elopement had a considerable effect upon our Caroline. She wondered; and she conjectured, and was at last obliged to set down with her perplexity unravelled; by no means satisfied with his [Mr. Stanley's] having pursued her; as she thinks he could not have any excusable inducement: indeed *none*, but the greatness of her fortune. However, she endeavoured to fasten the fault upon his godfather, and again gave

way to her prepossession; which, between ourselves, she would find it very hard to conquer.

Your letter gives a very striking picture of a very striking rascal. Valence will not, I think, if he can help it, let him escape.

According to agreement, Lord Danvers; our lovely cousin, and myself dined at Enfield on the day you left us. We found Sir William in the mending way; and indeed I do not know how he could be very bad, for Mr. Hurford was with him, and his company is, in my opinion, a great antidote to illness.

Last Thursday, Lord Danvers and Lady Caroline began their Oxfordshire journey and arrived at the Woodstock Cottage on Friday morning, as a letter on Saturday from Caroline informed me. I am glad I declined going with them, as I should have been wretched at the still longer delay of your letters. The last post brought me Caroline's account of their retired abode, which she highly praises.

Doctor Griffith, the Rector of Woodstock, dined with them on Sunday; and yesterday, they were welcomed by several of the neighbouring gentry: amongst others were the Lawsons and the Quaker-Family at the Lawn, of whom Caroline mentioned having heard so much from Miss Stanley's letters to her mother: and she says they are indeed equal to the highest encomiums; Mrs. Stanhope being one of the most amiable and respectable women she ever saw; and Miss Lewis the loveliest little girl. Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Eleanor Lawson she commended, likewise, very greatly; but confessed herself to be much disappointed at Miss Stanley's having left Woodstock a few days before they reached the Cottage. She is returned to Alverston, accompanied by Miss Lawson. The expectation of seeing this lady was, I dare aver, (though perhaps she, herself, scarce knew it) Caroline's chief inducement to promote her father's plan of visiting his Oxfordshire estate at this juncture. She therefore will not be sorry for the summons I shall now send my uncle to return. He will probably be in town on Friday or Saturday.

Caroline transmitted me a long and pleasing account of Miss Stanley and Sir Charles Conway, which I shall not now enter upon.

Just as I had written the last line, Sir William Jenyns sent up his name. I immediately received him, and he staid with me near an hour; during which time a great part of his conversation ran upon devising a method to expose Lord Crumpford's villainy in the most open manner in public company; as the law, he says, cannot inflict an adequate punishment. His intention is to invite him to the London Coffee-house to settle the pecuniary accounts, at which time he will request Lord Clare; Lord Elford; Sir Harry Browne; Major Sandford; Mr. Hurford; Mr. Lewis; Mr. Freer, and Mr. Mollineux to oblige him with their company; when, after opening the ostensible business of the meeting, he will put a written account of his lordships villanous proceedings into the hands of one of the gentlemen, requesting his reading it aloud, as the best means of

informing the company of the particulars which remain to be settled between the two noblemen; and which, he will make it to be understood, are, the next day, to be in all the public papers.

What you will think of it, I know not, but I came into his scheme the first moment; and shall be greatly disappointed if it is not put in execution.

And now, my ever-dear husband—an appellation it delights my heart to use—I will please myself with anticipating your early return; though when the expected time draws near, I shall be ready to quarrel with the driver of every carriage which stops at the house, or comes near it, if it brings not you.

Ever yours,
with the truest affection,
HARRIET MAYNARD.

LETTER, XXXIV.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MISS LAWSON.

Woodstock, eighth day of fourth month.

WHEN I peruse thy letters, my dearest Charlotte, I am ashamed to attempt a reply; so simple; so trifling, must all I have to say appear upon the comparison.

The accounts thou hast given us of thy proceedings are interesting beyond description. Thy last date was sixth day, therefore we are in expectation of soon hearing the sequel of thy story.

But ah Charlotte! I doubt thou wilt return quite *heart-less* to thy friends at Woodstock. Herbert Evelyn will, I fear, deprive us of thy best affection. Thy aunt saith she hath something to write to thee, at the bottom of my letter, which no one is to be permitted to peruse. It is, I imagine, upon this arduous subject. Were it not for the distance—But what a presumptuous girl am I to breath one murmuring sigh upon the prospect of what may be ordained for thy lasting benefit! Self is *so* ready to intrude upon all occasions! Excuse me, Charlotte, that I cannot think, without regretting the cause, of the probability of thy leaving Woodstock.

I have now to tell thee of our having been, at length, favored with the long-expected company of our new neighbours of the Cottage. Last sixth day, in the morning, the Earl of Danvers, accompanied by his lovely daughter, but not, as was expected, by their cousins, the Maynards, arrived at Woodstock. On first day they went to public worship, and were attended home by the reverend preacher, who staid dinner with them, and engaged that thy mother, our aunts, and myself, should visit them the following day, which we did; Friend Griffith kindly accompanying us. We were met at the Cottage by the Rayners, the Smythes, and the Sansons; forming, altogether, a very large party. The Earl of Danvers is a very handsome, sensible and polite man. Prepossessed as I was against him by thy cousin Carrington's account, I could not help admiring him as soon as he appeared.

But how shall I describe his truly charming daughter! I never, Charlotte, saw a more faultless face and form than Caroline Pemberton's: and her manners are so indicative of the strength and sweetness of her mind, that I cannot conceive an idea of any thing mortal to excel her. We all returned home in the highest admiration of this justly celebrated young woman. Our party was there some little time before the rest of the company, and was received with a cordiality beyond expressing. My aunt was particularly distinguished by the lovely Caroline. I mention this distinctly, because people of our sect are not apt to catch the attention of those in gayer life. She expressed a very lively regret at thy and Emma's having left Woodstock before her arrival; and asked if we had heard from thee since thou wentest, and if there were any probability that the disagreement which she heard had happened between Emma and Sir Charles Conway—

as he is called—would be adjusted. The Stanley family, at length, became our chief conversation; and she appeared so interested in all that concerned them, having, she said, imbibed a strong prejudice in their favor, that thy aunt (upon finding the circumstance of the disagreement was known, and that the lovely Caroline was, as she told us, personally acquainted with Charles Conway) thought it right to acquaint her with the heads of the whole story; at which she expressed the utmost astonishment, and begged, since she was already so far favored, that she might, at a proper opportunity, be still farther obliged with the particulars of an affair which had deeply engaged her attention. The earl now came in, and soon after, the rest of the company. We, therefore, settled it that she should return our visit the next morning but one; call at thy house, and take with her, to ours, thy mother and aunt; as her father, she said, would on that day be engaged till near dining time, with a party of gentlemen.

Thus thou seest we all at once commenced intimate acquaintance, and this morning, about ten o'clock, she arrived, according to agreement, bringing with her in the carriage thy worthy relatives.

After a little free and friendly conversation had passed, the business of thy letters was entered upon. We recounted to her as many of the particulars as memory could furnish, and then it was appointed for me to read all that we have received from thee since thy arrival at Alverston; beginning at thy first short note of intelligence respecting thy and Emma's safe and pleasant reception at the Park. Caroline was exceedingly attentive to every circumstance. She seemed to breathe with caution lest she should miss a syllable. Had the accounts concerned her dearest friends, she could not have appeared more interested. When she mentioned Emma's father and mother, she spoke in terms of admiration: in pity, when she talked of the dear girl herself; and smiled at the liveliness of George's character. In thy first note, thou observest upon his unusual inalertness. Upon which she remarked—"A love fit I suppose. Young men of his turn are apt, for a time, to be very violent in their attachments."

Thou afterwards mentionest his being impetuous.

"I have understood so," said she, "and it is a part of his character that I almost admire, because I think it has something noble for its foundation."

She really spoke with such animation when he was mentioned, that had she had a personal knowledge of him, I should have thought he was favored by her particular partiality.

Thy letter written on sixth day morning came next under my eye.

I cannot tell thee the praises she gave to the friend of my heart; to whom she said she had had the happiness of being introduced at Tunbridge, and repeated her regret at thine absence from Woodstock.

She was greatly entertained with the letter last mentioned, and delighted with thy method of opening the important business.

When thou mentionest the dancing couples and George's inanimation, though paired with Emmeline Stafford—"Mr. Stanley again stupid!" said she: "It is as I said. He must certainly be in love."

My Charlotte and the Oxonian did not escape her notice and applause. It was, she observed, a charming beginning.

Polly Fenton's history greatly affected her. And when she heard the account which I gave thee in my last of sixth day's date, respecting her arrival at the Lawn; the reception she met with from my aunt and at thy house; with the great hopes we all have of her real reformation and future well-doing, the charming creature was softened into tears.

"You burst my heart, my dear friends"—was her pleasing expression—"by filling it with various passions." She then deeply sighed; dried her moistened eyes, and requested my going on.

Charlotte, I cannot speak a tenth of our admiration of this truly admirable beauty. We have almost continually dwelt upon her praises since she left us; expressing *our* regret that she came not before thou and Emma went to Alverston. However we hope some future occasion will be favorable to our wishes for your meeting.

I cannot give thee all her observations on the subject of thy letters. At almost every sentence she expressed her applause. George Stanley's impetuosity of temper entertained her. Yet once or twice she thought him, she said, too violent. Arabella Digby, and, as they are styled, Colonel Greville and Lord Fitzmurray, had their respective shares of her expressed abhorrence. After the letters were finished, we continued conversing upon the incidents they contained, and she requested to be favored with some intelligence from thy next packet; which we told her we every day expected to receive. We promised compliance, and she accepted the invitation thy mother gave her of spending a day at her house towards the latter end of the week. Sixth day was therefore fixed upon; it being the day that the tenants of the earl, in this part of the country, are to meet at the Cottage to revise some leases and other business, which Webber wisheth to lay before him. In the mean time, her father, she said, would call upon us, as he intended to accompany her in some visits round the neighbourhood.

She continued with us till two o'clock, and then returned to dinner, leaving with us thy mother and aunt, who are now below stairs.

Since I wrote to thee last, we have had company to stay with us. Robert Harley and his wife, with the little Maria, came to the Lawn on sixth day evening, and returned early on second day morning. Sally Harley's brother, Henry Colville, whom I once saw at Stanton, and who is an agreeable, lively, sensible, young man, accompanied them. About two years back, a distant relation of his mother's died, and left him an estate in

Leicestershire, of near two thousand pounds a year; upon which he has lived ever since he has been possessed of it. He was educated for a physician, but doth not chuse to practice. Thou, Charlotte, wouldst, I think, have been much pleased with Henry Colville, and he with thee.

But I must now lay aside my pen, and give this up to thy aunt to finish; as I believe she and thy mother are preparing to return.

Thine, my dear Charlotte,
and, next to thine,
thine Emma's,
in true cordiality,
MARIA LEWIS.

LETTER, XXXV.

MRS. ELEANOR LAWSON, TO MISS LAWSON.

Woodstock, Wednesday evening.

WE are just now, my dear Charlotte, returned from the Lawn. I brought with me Maria's letter, that I might write a few lines after her; but the little chit has scribbled so near the bottom, that there is not room for half a dozen lines. I therefore take a fresh sheet.

Maria supposes I am going to employ my pen about your agreeable and worthy young parson; but interesting as that subject may hereafter be, it is not my intention to investigate it at present. Miss Lewis herself is now my theme; and she herself has opened the business in question.

When Mrs. Stanhope attended Mrs. Harley in her late illness, Maria you know went with her. During their stay at Stanton, Mr. Colville, Mrs. Harley's brother, made a visit there, and was extremely struck with the grace of our little friend, while she was quite unconscious of her influence. After his sister recovered, he returned into Leicestershire; but, as it appears, Maria's image was too strongly impressed, to let him remain there in quiet, therefore last Monday was a week, he wrote—or rather, on that day Mrs. Stanhope received—the following letter, which I have permission to copy for your perusal. I intended to have *enclosed* it, with only a few lines of explanation at the bottom of Miss Lewis's, had she not so circumscribed my limits.

MR. COLVILLE, TO MRS. STANHOPE.

Twenty-eighth, of third month.

“Encouraged by the known lenity of my sister's much respected friend Stanhope, I presume to take up a pen to address her on a subject which is of the greatest importance to me; and to her, of considerable consequence.

Not to be prolix—I will at once declare Maria Lewis to be the occasion of this address.

I am aware, my friend, of the difficulties I have to encounter in my present pursuit. I know thou wilt object to my earnest wishes; and I, likewise, know from whence thy objections will originate. But let me lay the matter plainly before thee, and then let thy compassion unite with thy judgement, and, by softening it, induce thee to give a decision in my favor.

When I was last at Stanton I, for the first time, saw Maria Lewis, of whom I had before heard very often. I saw her. I conversed with her. Need I now say that I greatly admired her? surely not; for no one, however insensible, can avoid doing that, after admission into her company. To me she appeared to be all that can be wished for in a

companion—a friend—a WIFE. And to call her mine, is all the additional bliss I desire on this side the grave.

For a considerable time I combated with the affection I have imbibed; believing thou wouldst object to every engagement of the kind, at so early a period of Maria's life. But combat is, I find in vain. My heart urges me, *and my mind accords*, to solicit thy compliance with my wishes. Young as she is, she will soon be sought after by numbers; to one of which, the amiable tenderness of her disposition, unprohibited by prudence, may impel her to give her partiality; and should I, through my own forbearance, shut myself from a chance of this truly desirable election, I think it might greatly hurt me in more respects than one.

I will not multiply words. Thou hast my heart before thee, and wilt consider that *my* earthly felicity, as well as that of the dear Maria, seemeth to be put into thy power; therefore thou wilt not let a trifling consideration prevail against me.

My circumstances are, I imagine, well known to thee. If not, my sister will give thee information on that head. My present place of abode is reckoned a very pleasant one; but if any other would be deemed more eligible, and I could procure it, that article should not prevent my wishes.

As soon as I have written and sent this letter, I mean to set out for Stanton, and from thence hope to be admitted to visit thee at Woodstock to receive thine answer. A written one, I must petition against. If my hope is to be crushed by a negative, I pray thee to let it be given me personally.

“I am, my revered friend,
whether thou favorest me or not,
thine in sincerity,
HENRY COLVILLE.

To this, Mrs. Stanhope, wrote the following; directing it to the care of Mr. Harley.

“Last day of third month.

“My worthy young friend,

Notwithstanding thou requesteth to have no answer but a personal one, I cannot satisfy myself without addressing thee in writing, that, before I see thee, thou mayst know my sentiments.

When thou conjecturest that I shall withhold my consent to Maria Lewis' forming a very early engagement, thou conjecturest truly. I think her much too young at present to be a wife; and I should be sorry to be accessory in fettering her mind, or thine either, for any great length of time, in prospect of an event which, at last may not be permitted to take place. A union for life, must engross the cares of a thinking person; and when it is long in contemplation it giveth a habit of fixing all ideas to this world; consequently

maketh less familiar than is for either our future or *present* good, the thoughts of another! Besides this—young persons with good principles and tender dispositions must, of necessity, become very dear to each other, with such a view in perspective; and then if any thing divideth them—for Henry, we cannot ensure for futurity—what sad work is the separation! We are not our own carvers; nor is it fit we should be. Events are doubtless pre-disposed. I do not use the word ordained, because I would not convey the idea of fatality. We certainly may chuse the good and refuse the evil; or we may chuse the evil and refuse the good. But I believe if we duly attend, we shall all be sensible of a bias which will lead us into the given path; from which if we stray, we may again be brought into, though by a round-about way.

Thy letter to me is a letter I highly approve; nor can I wish for Maria a better heritage than thine. Her time of life is my only objection: yet young as she is, I had rather see her enter immediately into matrimony, which (do not let me mislead thee) I cannot consent to, than into a probable long connexion.

Thou wilt scorn the supposition of thy mind's undergoing an alteration. Remember, however, that thine own strength is thy greatest weakness; and that when we fancy ourselves to be very valiant, we are, in mercy, often left to ourselves, that a sense of our own frailty (for it is too probable that we shall then fall into the very errors against which we think ourselves most secure) may teach us true humility. Allowing, therefore, the possibility of this change in thy affection, how wretched might the poor Maria be made (for the female heart is formed to be *won* by tender sollicitation) whether, in that case, thou didst, or didst not, fulfil thine engagements.

And now I have said all my sentiments on this side of the question, I will tell thee that I shall not be averse to thy sometimes—not too often—visiting here with thy brother and sister Harley. I cannot consent to thy coming by thyself, because it would too evidently proclaim thy purpose; for though I should not be displeased to see Maria, in time, and as a friend, sensible of thy good qualities, I should rest upon thy truth not to endeavour to engage her *affection* by any over sedulous methods. And this is going farther than I purposed, because it may continue thee in a labyrinth, when it is possible Maria may remain insensible to thy merits. But if I see this likely to be the case (and thou must expect that I shall watch very strictly) thou must not be offended at my then entirely prohibiting thy visits; and even now, I bid thee to remember that I have already said they must not be too frequent.

It is possible thou mayest apprehend that some other, perhaps a less honorable one than thou hast, in this case shown thyself to be, may in the interim, *without my knowledge*, succeed in his endeavours to win my girl. It may occur to thee (as indeed thou intimatest) that the gratitude of her gentle mind, for the highest proof of esteem a man can show to a woman, may be softened into affection, while she remaineth insensible to thine attachment. But rest thyself satisfied on this head. It is very improbable any address should be made to Maria but through me; as she would reject every indirect attempt of such a nature; and I promise thee, as far as I ought to answer for any thing, that thy proposal shall be the first which shall be offered to her consideration; and that, at a proper

time, I will support it with all *due* influence, if thou shouldest determine to wait the uncertain event.

And now if thy calm reason dost not tell thee it would be better to avoid Woodstock till a future period—if thou wilt not be satisfied without being permitted to make thy visit here—in short, if, after what I have said thou art not afraid for *thyself*—then tell thy brother and sister I hope to see them with thee at the Lawn, and likewise the little Maria, at any time after fifth day next. But thou must not, Henry, come by thyself, as I repeat I shall esteem it a breach of confidence if Maria Lewis be made sensible of the purport of thy visit.

And now I will thank thee for the manner of thy proceeding, which hath fixed thee high in my esteem.

The path of rectitude is the path to happiness in which it is my hope thou wilt evermore be conducted.

Let my best respects be given to thy brother and sister, and do thou Henry rank me in the number of thy cordial friends,

ANNE STANHOPE.

I need not Charlotte make any comments upon either of the foregoing letters—They speak for themselves—but proceed to tell you that in case Maria ever mentions Mr. Colville with such favorable sentiments as may raise the idea of a partiality for him, it will accord with our good friend Stanhope's wishes if you forbear to take any notice to her of it, as you probably might be led to do in a jesting manner; she being desirous to keep, at present, from her mind all surmises of Mr. Colville's attachment. Maria's youth considered—I cannot but applaud Mrs. Stanhope's sentiments upon the occasion; though they are too opposite to the general method of proceeding.

We had yesterday a letter from Rachel. She says she has received yours from Alverston, and has replied to it. The style she writes in, is very unpleasing to your mother; consequently disagreeable to me.

The account which Miss Lewis gave of Polly Fenton, in her last letter, may be given of her now. Indeed she behaves exceedingly well. Yesterday she was introduced to Doctor Griffith under her assumed name of Mrs. Wyreley. However, she knows that he is acquainted with her story, as it is requisite he should be, that he may suit his advice to her circumstances.

Of the lovely Lady Caroline Pemberton I forbear to speak much, because Maria has been so copious on the subject. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard were prevented coming with the earl and his daughter. A very few words settled your mother's business with his lordship.

You will remember us to the inhabitants of the Park; will accept one half of your mother's best affection, and I am sorry to have cause to add, three fourths of mine. I would willingly divide it equally, but I cannot, between you and your sister.

ELEANOR LAWSON.

LETTER, XXXVI.

MR. MAYNARD, TO MRS. MAYNARD.

Wednesday night, April 8th.

I AM now, my Harriet, a visitor at Oakley Hill, and should feel myself very comfortable, had I not been so greatly disappointed in my expectations of finding that a letter from you had been left for me at Mansfield. The return of my messenger from that post-office, empty-handed, chagrined me considerably. Yet I am willing to believe the prevention to my hearing from you is trifling; endeavouring to persuade myself that if any accident had befallen you, I should have had intelligence of it from some-body about you, as a direction to Mr. Broomley must have been recollected.

Under this persuasion, I make myself tolerably satisfied, and will now recount to you my adventures.

Yesterday morning, I left my reverend friend and his Alethea; proceeding without interruption on my journey till I reached Plesly, which is about six miles from Oakley Hill, and stopping there a short time, sent John forward with my compliments to Mr. Slayton, if he found him at home, and that if it were convenient to him I would call, in consequence of his obliging invitation, and take a view of his paintings. John met me upon his return, soon after I left Plesly, with a polite message from the gentleman, importing that my company would be esteemed a most particular favor. Onward, therefore, I went, and was met by Mr. Slayton at his gate with great respect. I desired the postillion to take back his horses, and ordered Robert to go to Mansfield for fresh ones to come up directly; but this my present host would not permit, as he very earnestly requested to have the *honor*, he again termed it, of entertaining me at his house till—at least—to-morrow; adding, that as he understood, by my commands to my servant, I meant to sleep at Mansfield, he should think it quite an affront if I preferred an inn to his house.

There was no answering this, but by a compliance; to which indeed my wishes strongly urged me. I therefore sent Robert to the post-office, and came into the house with the old Squire, who immediately ordered tea and coffee, which after having drank, we proceeded to take a view of his pictures; and much entertained I was with them, for they absolutely are a very fine, though not a very large, collection. The pictures surveyed—we walked in the pleasure-grounds and gardens till near supper, and then sat down to conversation.

Mr. Slayton himself ushered in the name of the Stanleys, by informing me of a great discovery which has lately been made respecting Miss Stanley and Sir Charles Conway. The story is an extraordinary one. I reserve it till we meet; which GOD grant we may do happily, and that I shall find my dear Harriet perfectly well.

I cannot, you see, quite divest myself of my apprehensions.

From the young lady we adverted to the rest of the family. The old gentleman is extremely fond of his godson. He informed me of his intention to make him his Heir general; and added a wish that he could see him well married.

What a fine opening was here! The very one I wished for. My reply was—Why indeed, in this age of libertinism it ought to be the wish of all parents for their children; and you seem to act the part of a father to the gentleman in question.

Mr. Slayton. I love the boy, sir, as I love myself. I always did. I love his sister too. In short, I love the whole family. They are the nearest relations I have in the world.

Maynard. So I have heard; and I wish you may live to see your relations in that family encreased by the happy marriages of both brother and sister: but Mr. Stanley does not, I presume, think of a wife at present.

I would not, Harriet, seem to know any thing about Lady Lucinda Harrington; as I thought it would only lengthen my preface.

Mr. Slayton. Why I cannot absolutely speak to *that point*. George is *difficult*; and to say truth, he has some *pretension* to be nice in this particular. You have a large acquaintance, Mr. Maynard, in the world—cannot you help me to a lady suitable to my godson?

Recollecting *his* part of the conversation in Lady Stanley's dressing-room, respecting our cousin—I immediately saw his drift, and replied accordingly.

Maynard. Why I think I am acquainted with one of the finest young women in existence; but she, like your godson, is extremely difficult.

Mr. Slayton. She must, let me tell you, sir, be difficult *indeed*, if George Stanley cannot please her fancy.

Maynard. I can say the same thing for my cousin. The man who would not think himself happy with Lady Caroline Pemberton, ought never to know happiness upon earth.

Mr. Slayton. Aye, aye! Say you so, sir? Why if there are two such nonpareils, it would be a pity they should be parted. What say you! Shall we make a match of it?

Maynard. Upon my word I should not have the least objection to such a matter. For my uncle, I can answer; and I pretend to have some little influence with my cousin.

Mr. Slayton. But how shall we prevail with George?

Maynard. Prevail with him, sir! What a question is that, when *such a woman* is in prospect!

Mr. Slayton. Why truly I have heard great talk of her; and so has my boy. I remember his once saying that he never saw Lady Caroline Pemberton, but that if he was disposed to marry any one from character, she should be the woman: and he generously added, in answer to a remark of one present at the time, that if she were not possessed of a *single shilling*, his sentiments would be the same.

Maynard. A proper way of thinking at his time of life. But my cousin is not destitute of the goods of fortune.

Mr. Slayton. True: true. Not *destitute*; though not so abundantly favored as some others in her elevated situation.

Maynard. At the time, probably, that the conversation passed, which you mention, she was not; at least, it was *supposed* she was not. At *this* period she may be deemed one of the richest heiresses in the kingdom.

Mr. Slayton. How—how is that, sir! I thought—I supposed that the *son* which *young Pemberton* left had been heir to chief of the estate.

Maynard. He is dead, sir. He has been dead some time; but by a most villanous procedure the circumstance has been kept from disclosure. The business of my journey into the North, was to investigate the particulars of the event, which now stands acknowledged and properly confirmed; and the title of my cousin—there being no other male heir of the name—incontestable.

You never, Harriet, saw more wonder and anxiety in any countenance than now appeared in Mr. Slayton's. He sat in perfect silence during the time that I told him the story; which I did particularly; and when it was ended, seemed not to know what to say. At last—"Why bless my heart! this is a wonderful *turn-about*. But how—but how can we now think of looking up to such a lady? Nothing beneath a *Duke*—"

I interrupted him—Caroline Pemberton, Mr. Slayton, wants not rank. She *is* of rank, and can never be degraded: and if she cannot give her husband a title, she will give him distinction; as it will ever be believed the man of her choice must be a man of merit. Besides, Mr. Stanley has distinction from his family and from *himself*; and you may depend upon what I say, when I tell you that my cousin will see him through the same medium now, as she would have done had she been left a pennyless orphan; so exactly can she retaliate his own generous sentiments.

At the conclusion of my speech, the old gentleman's eyes betrayed his sensibility, and—"Noble; noble; upon my soul noble"—was all that for a few minutes he could utter. "But we will not be outdone in generosity, I can tell you. You shall see we will not"—said he; nodding his head.

After another silence, he arose; stood upon tip-toe, and, with his eyes sparkling and twinkling by turns, began to talk very fast. "If this matter could be brought about—If this thing could be done—zoodikers! we should be *first every where*. But do you think—do you think—it can ever be?"

Maynard. Upon my word I see no reason to the contrary. The earl, I have told you, I can answer for; and at his instance, and my Harriet's, (of whom Lady Caroline was ever very fond) I think I am not much afraid to undertake for my cousin likewise.

I never beheld a man so transported upon such an occasion. He almost danced for joy; and it was some time before I could so reduce him to moderation as to attend to the plan I wanted him to pursue. At length, however, he listened to me, and I repeated the sense of his own question — "*How shall we prevail with Mr. Stanley,*" who perhaps has not yet any great relish for matrimony, to come into measures that to us appear so eligible?

This question from you, Mr. Slayton, a few minutes back, I will confess, a little displeased me. However I now see it in its proper light, and will answer it myself. *Let him see the lady*. After that, depend upon it, we shall not have any farther difficulty. But let him see her before he knows any thing of the negociation between us, or you probably will find him refractory. Young men of his spirit love to *chuse* their partners. If they know the affair is concluded upon, and the lady won, they pursue it coldly, and as a matter of course: which method, let me warn you, will never succeed with Caroline Pemberton.

He promised to observe all I said and informed me that he should be obliged to go to London in about ten days to settle his late purchase of Hazle-wood Lodge; that he would request his godsons company, and then carry him to my house as on a visit to me.

About the time you mention Mr. Slayton, I shall probably be obliged to go again down into Cumberland, Lord Danvers having had a Steward there who is the veriest rogue in being, and must be closely looked after: but my absence will not be of any consequence. Mrs. Maynard will assist you in any manner you can wish. Make her a visit before you carry Mr. Stanley to my house, and settle with her all preliminaries; to which my cousin must be kept an entire stranger; as she has a great deal of delicacy, and would be much displeased to know that this matter had been previously settled.

We had a considerable deal more conversation upon the subject, in which we both found ourselves particularly interested. Mr. Slayton told me what great things he intended to do for his godson, and I dare say I very easily could have prevailed upon him to have sent off directly for a lawyer to make a rough draft of settlements. He much wanted to fix a place of residence for the couple his wishes had already united, and mentioned resigning the house in which he lives, or adding to that he has lately purchased.

There could not I told him, were the meditated union to take place, be any occasion for him, or any body to be put to inconvenience on account of residence, as the earl had several fine seats on different parts of his estate; particularly one in Rutlandshire, near to a summer retirement of mine on the borders of Leicestershire, which was a delightful situation indeed; and that I was very certain his lordship would yield up any one his daughter preferred.

In the height of our conversation we were interrupted by a servant's bringing in a letter, which proved to be from Mr. Stanley, importing the intention of a large party from Alverston Park to dine with him the next day, if he should be at home, and the proposal met with his approbation: that they meant to set out early in the morning for Hazle-wood Lodge (which is about midway between Alverston and Oakley Hill) where they should wait the messenger's return, and if Mr. Slayton were from home or otherwise engaged, they would pursue the plan they had formed of a short tour through a part of Derbyshire and take Oakley Hill in their return.

With this the old gentleman was quite delighted. "You now, Mr. Maynard shall see my godson and shall confess that he deserves a very fine lady."

I told him I must leave him early in the morning, as I purposed reaching London to morrow evening.

"I wont hear a word of it. I wont hear a word of it. I *insist* upon your staying to see George. Excuse me Sir: excuse my being so peremptory; but *pray* do oblige me, if your business will any way permit."

I smiled at his urgency, and agreed not to leave Oakley Hill till after dinner. Mr. Slayton then called in the Alverston messenger to enquire if he knew who was to be of the party, and was informed that it consisted of Sir Edward and Lady Stanley; Miss Stanley; Miss Lawson; Sir Charles Conway; Mr. Evelyn and our hero.

"Well done; well done. I am mighty glad of all this"—exclaimed Mr. Slayton; and when he went to write a note of answer, gave me Mr. Stanley's letter to peruse, with which I was most particularly pleased. The air—the spirit—and the good sense it conveyed, being singularly striking.

After this we separated for the night, and being determined to send off Robert in the morning, that he might reach home tomorrow, I sat down to write a few lines of mere information respecting my return, and was betrayed by the subtilty of my subject to this unreasonable length.

Early in Friday I hope to be with you; as I intend going from hence to-morrow as soon after dinner (which Mr. Slayton tells me he always has ready by two o'clock) as propriety will admit. I confess I feel a strong inclination to stay and see our cousin-elect, or I should have been off by six in the morning.

My dearest Harriet, adieu.

Ever truly yours,
AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, XXXVII.

LADY CAROLINE PEMBERTON, TO MRS.
MAYNARD.

Woodstock, April 10th.

YOUR summons, my dear Harriet, reached us yesterday. We should immediately have obeyed it, had not engagements on both my father's side and mine prevented us. Those of my father could not be deferred; and *mine*, fastened themselves upon my *inclination*. I doubt I need not now tell you they are relative to Alverston. To-morrow morning, by the time this will reach you, we mean to set off for London, and hope to see you in the evening.

Shall I reserve the information I have gained till we meet? Or shall I, while my sentiments upon what has passed, are lively, give you particulars?

Harriet, I fear they will *long* be lively on this subject. I need not, I doubt, apprehend their fading on my remembrance. Therefore I will only just mention the heads of what I have gathered since my short residence in Woodstock.

In my note of Monday evening, I told you I was engaged to go on the Wednesday morning to the Lawn with Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Eleanor Lawson, to hear read some letters from their Charlotte respecting affairs at Alverston. I went, and was greatly interested in what I heard. Miss Stanley's whole story was particularized, and much said about Mr. Stanley's depression of spirits, with a supposition of his being in love.

The idea of his having been disappointed respecting Lady Lucinda Harrington—now Chapone—at first presented itself, and was, I will candidly confess, very unwelcome; and, as I have since found, very untrue; for this day (though I should not mention it quite yet, as I am talking of Wednesday; but it will intrude) I saw a whimsical paper written by Mr. Stanley, and presented to Miss Lawson. He calls it his apology for his Bristol excursion, which—can you believe it, Harriet!—the little portrait, that I was so much disturbed about losing, was the great occasioner of his journey! Fact, upon my word! He found this image of himself at Hazle-wood Lodge, [I thought there was a probability of my having dropped it there] and from several circumstances was led to believe it had been produced by the pencils of Lady Lucinda, and that she was partial to him to a degree of distress; upon which, with a precipitance—increased he says by sentiments of compassion—quite in character with himself, he set off for Bristol: being, as may be supposed, desirous of coming at the real truth of the circumstances and of the lady's character; to which he was at that time an entire stranger. Miss Lawson sends this

apology of Mr. Stanley's out of his sister's reach, lest his evident attachment to—*Maria Birtles*, though she says, the name is not mentioned—should, were she to see it, occasion her some concern. In a previous letter, she tells Miss Lewis that she has long had a rumbling notion of this *much talked of* young woman, and that she once asked him if she had the appearance of a gentlewoman.

I cannot, Harriet, give you his reply, as the opinion he expressed was extravagant: nevertheless, I was weak enough to be pleased with it.

Miss Lawson, in several other parts of her letters, afforded me much pleasure by the instances she gave, as well as by her own conjectures, respecting Mr. Stanley's remembrance of this *Maria Birtles*; under which name (though the time I wore it, I was on another account greatly distressed) I experienced more real satisfaction than—than perhaps I ought to have done. For, Harriet, let me assure you that, notwithstanding I so freely acknowledge—

But we will talk of these matters another time. In the humour I am in at present, I will not trust myself upon the subject. Yet just let me observe that, all things considered, I cannot say that I think I have any *very* great reason to take offence at his leaving me at Alverston at such a crisis, and on such an occasion. I was, you know, but as a servant in the family, though they would not treat me as such; and it certainly would have been a degree of imprudence to have given entire way to any prepossession he might find himself inclined to entertain for me *in that character*.

But you will say that I am determined, at any rate, to excuse him. I doubt I am; and that the unravelling this affair has fettered me faster than before. Well, I cannot help it. All things must have their course.

Upon the conclusion of my Wednesday's visits, having heard read all the letters which had then been received from Alverston, I engaged to dine at the Lawn as on this day; (upon which my father had fixed to settle with his Woodstock tenants) the Lawsons, or rather Miss Lewis, for *she* receives the letters, expecting to be able to entertain me with the sequel, as I may call it, of Miss Stanley's story; which sequel, with some other particulars, I have accordingly heard.

I forbear to say any thing farther of my Woodstock neighbours, than that they have improved upon me at every interview.

My father bids me to ask your sending an order for Mr. Orgall's attendance in Berkley Square to-morrow evening.

I doubt not Mr. Maynard's safe arrival in London before this time. It grieves me to think of his having another journey into Cumberland on this villanous Tomkin's account. Sure the business might be settled by agency! My father was, as you may suppose, much hurt by the behaviour of a man whom he had ever treated with the greatest kindness. He says he shall leave the whole management of the business to my cousin.

The post-man blows his horn.

Farewell.

CAROLINE PEMBERTON.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.