

VICISSITUDES
IN
GENTEEL LIFE.

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IN

GENTEEL LIFE

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

The Shafts of Envy dart at strongest Forts. But what can Envy
have to do with me? Pass by, perhaps, and smile. Envy
gives Honor. Envy acknowledges Superiority in
wishing to be like the one she hates, and holds
in feigned Contempt.

SMITH.

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VICISSITUDES

IN

GENTEEL LIFE.

LETTER, I.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, April 10th.

I Now, Maria, write from the seat of Mr. Slayton, at which we arrived yesterday to dinner. It was our plan to have proceeded this morning upon the intended tour, but the master of the mansion would not permit our departure.

Shall I venture to say that I never remember to have lived a happier time than the present? Or shall I forbear, from an apprehension of a critical investigation into the cause?

Conscious then, you will say, that it will not bear examining. Indeed, Maria, I am not. I only threw out that line to alarm you. The cause of my present pleasantness may easily be accounted for. Every body is pleasant round me; and I must be a misanthrope not to be pleasant too at this juncture. Sir Edward and Lady Stanley look about, and then upon each other, with the lively rapture of seventeen, rationalized by the tranquility of sober sixty; so greatly do they enjoy the returning prospect of a union between Sir Charles and their Emma; while she, dear girl, has regained all her former bloom and liveliness; which, it must be confessed, the late unhappy period considerably diminished. She is now, as formerly, the life of the party she helps to compose; every heart is hers; and when she leaves the company, we are all sensible of a deprivation till her return. The *very* fine edge of her vivacity is, I think, rendered rather less keen; or if its sharpness is retained, it appears not; she seeming to have acquired additional softness by her late painful exercises; which renders her a completely charming character.

As to Sir Charles Conway—his felicity appears to be beyond description. The natural liveliness of his disposition is so sweetly blended with dignity and gentleness, that, as I suspect I have before more than once observed, it is next to impossible to see—to hear him, and not be charmed. His ardent affection for Miss Stanley is evident in his every look and action; not from such a manner as *presses upon the observation* of the nicest sensibility; nor would a third person ever feel himself in the way; as is too often the case when in company with a pair so circumstanced. *Her* affection may be seen as well as his; but it wears a different appearance. A sweet, modest, *withdrawing* acknowledgment—if I may be allowed to coin a phrase—answers candidly, though with delicacy, his more tender and open avowal. I never saw love assume so beautiful—shall I, Maria, say so *inviting*—an aspect?

Mr. Stanley—of whom more in a few lines—exhibits a meridian sky with quick passing clouds. His countenance, all lively and glowing as it naturally is, shines upon every beholder, till a

sudden thought seems to steal upon his features, and the glow is abated; but upon being spoken to, he starts, and is instantly re-animated.

What am I to say, Maria, about Mr. Evelyn? Why this—that the philanthropy of his heart enjoys the happiness of all around him; and that his goodness and good sense partake of, and increase the general felicity.

Can I, my dear friends, be insensible to pleasure in such a society? Impossible: my heart is dilated, and I seem all expansion.

You must allow me some peculiar expressions, because the sentiments which lead my pen are of a peculiar nature.

Come Maria—come soon into Derbyshire. Your company is warmly requested by every individual of our party. Emma says she will write to you by the post which goes this evening, to entreat the performance of your given promise. I know no one's consent is wanting but your own; so we will not admit of any excuses, as we hope Mrs. Stanhope's amendment continues.

Mr. Slayton—whom, though a principal person in the groupe, I had absolutely forgotten—is a character I know not how to delineate.

In his person, he is neither stout, nor thin, nor ungentle. His features are strong and rough, but not unpleasant. In his disposition he is whimsical and positive, but not unpersuadable; and his understanding is naturally good. At an early age he was deeply in love with a lady who died in a consumption; since which time he has never attempted matrimony. His godson is his darling; though he often jars with him. Their quarrels generally begin about Mr. Stanley's not being willing to put on the hymeneal fetters at present. A short time back, he made a proposal to the family that if George would marry within a twelve-month, to his approbation, he would immediately put him into possession of fifty thousand pounds and secure to him the like sum to be paid upon his death; but if he refused the conditions, he would present ten thousand to Miss Stanley, and find an heir from a distant and different branch of his family. The reason he gives for this preceeding, is, that he thinks if Mr. Stanley's senior friends leave him in a single state he never—such an opinion has he of all the young men of the present generation—will enter any other; and he professes *so mortally to hate lady-keeping*—I use his own words—that sooner than leave one shilling of his fortune to a batchelor he declares he will give it all to the Magdalene College. Sir Edward abets his proposal; being likewise very desirous to see his son married. However I cannot think Mr. Slayton will leave his estate from the Stanley family, do George what he will; as he has no other relations but some very distant ones from a half brother of his mother's.

And now, Maria, for some news about your amiable new favourite, Lady Caroline Pemberton. We were yesterday, at our arrival at Mr. Slayton's, introduced to Mr. Maynard, nephew to Lord Danvers; who was upon his return from his journey into the North, to investigate and settle Lady Caroline's reversionary right to the whole of the Pemberton estate; there not being, it seems, any apprehension of his lordship's marrying again; as he never could be prevailed upon to do that, even when it was supposed his nephew's son, if he had none of his own, would inherit the estate and title. But it now appears that this presumptive heir has been dead some time, and by the most

complicated villany of that wretch, Lord Crumpford, aided by the child's mother, kept a secret from the world; while a little usurper—supposed to be an illegitimate son of either the vile Lord's or his brother's—has been dressed up and put to Eton as the deceased heir of the earldom.

The story is very long and very wicked. I cannot now give you any particulars. Suffice it, that every thing has been proved incontestably.

Mr. Maynard is extremely genteel in his person, and one of the most complete fine gentlemen I ever beheld. I had not, when he was here, received your Wednesday's packet, or I should, at my introduction to him, have expressed my concern at having been absent from Woodstock when Lady Caroline Pemberton made her first visit there; which circumstance, to my great surprise, he, after some time had elapsed, informed us of; politely saying, that a letter he had just then received from Mrs. Maynard, mentioned his cousin's disappointment at finding I was from home; adding, that he supposed she would return with the Earl to London the latter end of this week, as he had sent his lordship a summons to meet him there upon business of consequence. So Maria you have probably, by this time, lost your new friend; of whom I think I should have been jealous, had she staid amongst you much longer.

Mr. Maynard left us after dinner. He seemed impatient to get home; having been out longer than he expected. Till that morning he had, he said, been very uneasy at not having received any letter from Mrs. Maynard since he left her, and spoke with so much affection upon the occasion, that I was quite charmed with him.

I am called away; therefore lest I should not find an opportunity to write again before the post goes out, will here subscribe the name of

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

Tell my aunt that I thank her for the addition she made to your packet, (which greatly pleased me) and that I mean to obey her injunctions.

LETTER, II.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, Friday night.

Another opportunity offers for a little writing, which I with the more pleasure make use of, as you tell me my relation of our goings-on affords amusement to my dear friends at Woodstock.

After Mr. Maynard left us yesterday, we walked round the grounds of this pleasant little habitation, and were very agreeably entertained the whole evening. This morning we had a fishing party, and when we returned, found a messenger with letters conveyed by the morning's post to Alverston; amongst the number of which, was my dear Maria's.

I am sorry to tell you, that happy as I am in this part of the country, I find a grumbling in my

heart at Lady Caroline's visiting Woodstock during the time of my being absent from it. Of this, however, I am most truly ashamed; though I find a little excuse for it from the extreme amiableness of the lovely creature's character. I think I never heard a woman more celebrated. Mr. Maynard spoke of her in the warmest terms of affectionate admiration; saying she was the joy and pride of all her relations.

Having perused your packet before dinner, I, after that was over, read the part which related to Lady Caroline (and indeed some other parts) to my friends here, by way of a desert; and this occasioned an argument between Mr. Slayton and his godson.

"I think," said the old gentleman, "that Lady Caroline Pemberton must make any man in the world very happy. George, are not you of my opinion?"

Mr. Stanley. Fancy, my good sir, in these matters, is some times apt to overrule the judgment.

Mr. Slayton. But what a fanciful fancy must it be that could not fancy such a charming creature.

Mr. Stanley. Good changes upon the word fancy, sir; but to carry them a little farther—I fancy that if at a fanciful time of life your fancy had been fixed upon any other woman, you would not have fancied this, or any second; however justly celebrated for beauty and goodness.

Mr. Slayton. And is *that* the case, George? Is your fancy fixed, boy? This comes [angrily he spoke it] of handsome waiting-maids.

The crimson deepened upon Mr. Stanley's cheek; but he seemed to be upon his guard. Emma looked surprised; Lady Stanley concerned; while George with apparent carelessness (passing over his innuendo) replied—"My fancy, sir! I am not talking of myself. Your question was a general one, and I gave it a general answer."

Mr. Slayton. Well, well: perhaps I spoke without much thinking. But to end the matter—Will you make this fine lady your wife?

Mr. Stanley. Upon my word, sir, you must think me very presumptuous if you suppose I can have an idea of looking up to a young lady who, with respect to family; fortune, and endowments, both personal and mental, stands in one of the most elevated situations in the kingdom; and that, without ever having been the least acquainted with her.

Mr. Slayton. Well, but suppose she would consent to have you, godson! What would you say then?

Mr. Stanley. You suppose a very improbable matter, sir. Lady Caroline Pemberton has just pretensions to look up to a ducal coronet. Can you then *fancy*—to repeat the battered word—that she would condescend to think of an alliance with the family of a private gentleman?

Mr. Slayton. Well, but let us talk for talking's sake; and let me repeat my question. If this fine young lady were to notify that she would accept you, would you promise to make her your wife.

Mr. Stanley. If you must be answered categorically—I would not; except I found, upon an acquaintance, that I could give her the first place in my *heart* as well as in my esteem and admiration.

Mr. Slayton. Foolish boy. But suppose, upon seeing her, you found you *could* love her above all other women, would you *then* consent to marry her?

Mr. Stanley. You now, sir, ask a question that requires no answer. If I loved Lady Caroline Pemberton above all other women, and if she would condescend to accept me, you must suppose me to be either a fool or a madman to have any doubt of my ready—my *grateful* compliance.

Mr. Slayton. Very well, young man; very well. This now is as it should be. Well, and will you then go with me to London? Will you consent to see this fine young creature with a princely fortune?

Mr. Stanley. Consent to see her, sir! In what light? Not I hope—But go with you to London! Yes; when you please. I am ready to attend you at a moment's warning. But it must be upon this condition—that you promise me I shall not be mentioned to Lady Caroline Pemberton as one who is so ridiculous as to have the least idea of soliciting her particular distinction.

Mr. Slayton. I *will* promise: I *do* promise that she shall not have any occasion from me to look upon you in any other light than as one who accompanies me upon a visit I have promised Mr. Maynard to make at his house, (where Lady Caroline, doubtless, frequently resides) the next time I go to London.

Mr. Stanley. Well, sir, we then mutually promise. *I*—to attend you to town. *You*—that I shall not be made to look like a fool when I arrive there.

It was then agreed that the gentlemen should set out for London at our return, and that we should proceed on our tour to-morrow morning. As we do not mean to make a stay at any place, you must not, Maria, expect to hear from me till I again see Alverston: but do not let me be disappointed in my hope of finding there, at that time, a letter from Woodstock.

After tea we had a pleasant walk to a little village about a mile from Oakley Hill, to look at some curious pieces of old coin lately found there in a little meadow. As we were coming back, I missed my pocket-book, in which I had made some memorandums respecting some of the pieces, and wishing to return in hopes of finding it, Mr. Stanley offered to accompany me; insisting, in his rattling way, that the rest of the party should go forward. Back, therefore, we went, and found the lost book in the little cottage where we saw the coin; the mistress of which had just called in one of her daughters to bring it after us.

As we returned, Mr. Stanley and I had a great deal of serious conversation respecting his sister and Sir Charles Conway, and after that, on a variety of other subjects. At length his going to

London was mentioned, and I bid him take care of his heart, or the celebrated young lady whom he would probably see at Mr. Maynard's, would release him of it. When, with a very serious air he replied—"Indeed, madam, it is far—too far—out of the reach of even Lady Caroline Pemberton's attracting influence: but I go to London in hope of finding its mistress."

Charlotte. You surprise me, sir, by speaking on this subject with an air of gravity unfamiliar to your features. Is it possible you can in earnest have parted with your heart?

Mr. Stanley. Miss Lawson, I have. You are, I know, too good to let any re-communication of this kind distress either my mother or my sister; therefore I dare to speak to you upon this pressing subject without any apprehension; without any reserve.

Charlotte. Your opinion of me, sir, obliges me. Permit me to say my heart witnesses your sentiments upon this particular. I would not give either of them pain on any consideration.

Mr. Stanley. I am convinced of it, or I would not tell you that my affections are rivetted to a young woman who has neither fortune; friends, nor I believe descent to boast of. She is only, Miss Lawson, one of the most beautiful creatures upon earth, with a head and heart contending for superiority in goodness, and both excelling her outward form.

Charlotte. Let me spare you a farther communication, by mentioning the name of Maria Birtles.

Mr. Stanley. My dear Charlotte! I am delighted with you. And do you then think Maria Birtles answers the description I have given?

Charlotte. Of that, you know, I cannot be a competent judge. My ideas are gathered from what I have heard you and the rest of the family express.

Mr. Stanley. Well, madam, my description goes not one syllable beyond the truth; and I confess to you my every wish is centered in that one of calling her my own.

Charlotte. May I ask where she now is, Mr. Stanley?

Mr. Stanley. That I unhappily cannot tell you. Her letter to my mother gave not the least insight into the place of her present abode; and it is that which distracts my very soul.

I cannot, Maria, give you all the particulars of our long conversation on this subject; though there are many parts of it you would be pleased with: but this is a matter which seems to threaten an overthrow to the happiness of this, at present, very happy family; as Mr. Stanley protests most solemnly he never will speak to any woman upon matrimony till he has seen or heard something of Maria Birtles. Knowing his temper thoroughly, I am greatly concerned for the strong partiality he has imbibed for this young woman; which, upon my word, I do not wonder at, when I recollect what every one who has seen her says of her. Since our return, he has shown me the letter she wrote to Lady Stanley after her leaving Alverston, which is truly expressive of her given character. The sentiments and language are admirable; and it is written with the greatest accuracy. As to the hand-

writing—it is one of the most elegant I ever saw: but what surprised me more than any thing Mr. Stanley told me, was, her being the delineator of the little portrait which I told you was found at the ball at Hazle-wood Lodge; which, he says, has given him hours of disquietude; as he could not, for a considerable time, form the least conjecture of the person who had so distinguished him. But when he saw the above-mentioned letter it appeared, beyond doubt, to be Maria Birtles, as the handwriting was the very same as that on the back of the picture.

This discovery, as you may suppose, from his character, almost drove him to madness. His anxiety; admiration; *gratitude*, and affection, were now all centered in this lovely maid, who, beyond a dispute, was sympathetically sensible of his attachment, though her delicacy and discretion kept back any acknowledgment; but the lines at the back of the picture discovered her sentiments.

I asked Mr. Stanley to permit my taking a copy of them. He hesitated; but, at length, complied. I will enclose them for your perusal. I do not, Maria, pretend to be a great judge of poetry, but they please me extremely, and my approbation of them delighted Mr. Stanley, who is, in good truth, most deplorably in love with your namesake.

What the event will be I cannot conjecture. I am quite concerned about it indeed, but dare not give the least hint of it to either Lady Stanley or Emma; for what end would that answer? Distress them, and perhaps drive him to extremities. He is soon going to London with Mr. Slayton; for no other intent, he confessed to me, but to endeavour to find out his enslaver, which made him so ready to accompany the old gentleman; being previously determined to make use of the first pretence that offered for going thither. He would have set out the moment he had read the letter to Lady Stanley, had he not been fearful of awakening her apprehensions; and then she would probably have laid him under a promise opposite to his wishes.

Sir Charles Conway is acquainted with all the circumstances of this affair, and labours to persuade Mr. Stanley to relinquish his purpose; but his labours are unavailing.

Mr. *Evelyn*, Maria! It is, I think, some time since I mentioned his name. My not more frequently talking about him may probably appear like affectation; or perhaps *forbearance*. I do not know how it is, but I really do feel a little awkward upon the subject; yet I know not for what reason; for though I must confess that he treats me with a most pleasing attention, it does not, I *think*, indicate any particular meaning. Emma indeed says—But what signifies her opinion in such a case? She can only *conjecture*; and that I can do myself. I wonder, Maria, what (if his complaisance should encrease) my mother and aunt would wish me to say to him! It is but scribbling for scribbling sake you know; and as I have pretty nearly exhausted all my subjects, I may as well fill up this little remnant of paper with suppositions.

Mr. Evelyn talks of going to Oxford in a few days after our return to Alverston. At the time he mentioned it, he looked at me; bowed, and said he hoped, when he went, to be honored with some commands of mine to Woodstock.

Like a very simpleton I made no other answer than by a return of his bow; which a foolish blush officiously accompanied. I was quite ashamed of myself. Why did I blush? And why did I not speak? It looked as if I thought—as if I fancied—I cannot tell *what* it looked like. Emma says I

appeared conscious. Conscious of what? Why, she adds—of having formed an idea that I myself am the subject of his errand into Oxfordshire. She rallies me most abominably, and would persuade me that I am going to be in love. But she only speaks her wishes, that she may have one to keep her in countenance. Soon after Mr. Stanley's return, she will, I believe, be Lady Conway; as Mr. Slayton, who has a great knowledge of law-business, has authority to direct the settlements. The old gentleman this evening told me he should present her with five thousand guineas on the day of her marriage. After all, he is an honest, generous, veteran. His peculiarities are, to be sure, rather striking; but I have a kind of sneaking regard for him; perhaps, because he professes that I am one of his very great favorites.

Emma has now brought me her letter to enclose. What can she have written! She has sealed it, and refuses to tell me its contents. I will venture a wager she has been prating about—I declare I am half afraid of her. Do not believe, Maria, that I—But perhaps I am too suspicious. Conscience, *you* will say, awakens my alarms. You are mistaken. This girl is now all roguery, and will make great from small; *therefore* it is that I fear her.

But adieu. I will finish, and subscribe to the incontestible truth of my being yours, in the height of friendship,

the name of
CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

We think of returning to Alverston tomorrow fe'nnight.

LETTER, III.

MR. SLAYTON, TO AUGUSTUS MAYNARD, ESQ.

Oakley Hill, April 16th.

DEAR SIR,

I Take the liberty to inform you that I have received a letter from my lawyer, to tell me my presence in town will be necessary next week. I therefore think of setting out on Monday or Tuesday, if my godson, who has promised to accompany me, will by that time be ready. He is still absent with the party upon a tour through the North of this county, but they all purpose returning to Alverston next Saturday. I hope, sir, we shall make a job of this business. Miss Lawson read us a letter received just after you left us, from one of her friends at Woodstock, which more than confirmed the account you gave of your charming cousin. I then, as from myself, proposed the matter to my young man. But I cannot say that he received the mention of it quite so tractably as I could have wished; but, as you observe, sir, he has not yet *seen* the lady.

Youth is very headstrong. I wish this boy would be ruled by me, and I think he would be one of the greatest men in the kingdom: for, as you said when we parted, every thing is his own, both as to person and mind.

With my respectful compliments to your lady, at present unknown,

I am, sir,

your most obedient servant,
SAMUEL SLAYTON.

LETTER, IV.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MISS LAWSON.

Woodstock, sixteenth day of fourth month.

IF this letter goeth duly, and thy friends keep to their purposed time of return, thou wilt receive it on seventh day next, and we shall hope, as soon after as the mail can bring it, to have information of the safety of thyself and party after your excursion.

Thy journal from Chapel in Frith reached us this morning. The account it gave of the Peak entertained us exceedingly. We expect thou wilt give us in another letter the rest of thy adventures.

And now, Charlotte, I must give thee a little friendly pain, by informing thee that my dear aunt's health will not permit my thinking of leaving her at present. Last second day she had a return of her disorder, which, however, doth not alarm me so much as it at first did, because Doctor Allen hath pronounced it to be the gout, which I am bid to hope will be of service to her constitution. She is now confined to her chamber. Thy kind mother and aunt are our constant visitants; and good

Doctor Griffith, likewise, generally seeth us once every day. My aunt's spirits are exceeding good, and she saith she is extremely comfortable and happy now the pain is increased in her foot and ankle, as the disorder seemeth to have entirely left her head and stomach.

Tell Emma Stanley I am greatly sensible of her kindness. With singular pleasure should I accept immediately her invitation could I leave my dear aunt Stanhope; and that as soon as she is restored, I shall not hesitate to exchange, for a time, the serene pleasures of Woodstock for the more lively ones of Alverston Park: and, Charlotte, tell her, likewise, that I thank her for her intelligence respecting a certain pair of lovers-elect, about whom I am greatly interested. From her account, as well as from thy hints, I think Herbert Evelyn's chief business in Oxfordshire will be confined to Woodstock.

Thou pretendest to wonder, Charlotte, respecting the sentiments of thy mother and aunt, should the young preacher make to thee an offer of his heart—for that, in simple English, is thy meaning of the increase of his complaisance. Why, my dear friend, dost thou hesitate to conclude that thy choice will be theirs? They do not believe thou wilt chuse amiss; therefore leave the election entirely to thyself: and if such a chit as thy Maria may presume to give her opinion upon this occasion, the present candidate need not much fear any opposition.

Excuse me, Charlotte. I will confess I have waded beyond my depth. This is a science in which I am so little versed, that I ought not to presume to give one sentiment on the subject. Yet thy happiness so nearly concerneth me, that I cannot prevent my ideas from wandering to the probability of Herbert Evelyn's success; being pretty strongly persuaded that he will gladly give thee his heart for thine.

Mayest thou, my dear Charlotte, be directed by the Great Director in this and all other occasions throughout thy existence; and with this expressed wish will I bid thee farewell.

MARIA LEWIS.

LETTER, V.

MR. MAYNARD, TO SAMUEL SLAYTON, ESQ.

St. James's Square, April 17th.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter, dated yesterday, is now put into my hands.

I am glad to know of your intended journey to town, though at the time you think of beginning it, I shall probably have left London, as I am necessitated to set off for the North, respecting the business which carried me thither before, next Monday; but this cannot be of any detriment to our meditated event, as Mrs. Maynard can assist you as well—perhaps better than I could, were I to be present. She is perfectly acquainted with all that passed between you and me, when I was so hospitably entertained at Oakley Hill; and she has her cousin's happiness so warmly at heart, that (being much pleased with my account of Mr. Stanley and his connexions, and knowing he will not find any prior preference to combat with) she particularly interests herself in the success of our negotiation. The earl is likewise extremely well satisfied with our treaty; but Lady Caroline is, and must be kept, a stranger to our plan till after Mr. Stanley's introduction.

Let me request you to oblige Mrs. Maynard with a card of information as soon as you arrive in town, which I hope you will not leave till my return from Cumberland, when I please myself with thinking I shall find matters advancing to our wishes.

I am, my dear sir,

your obliged,

and obedient servant,

AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, VI.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, Saturday, April 18th.

JUST before dinner we returned, my dear Maria, safe and happy to this charming spot, which is much more beautiful in every respect than any of the fine places we have seen in our late ramble; some of which have been admired for their simplicity; others for their magnificence; the rest for a romantic appearance—for neatness—for a hospitable air, &c. all which are united in this one habitation. Hazle-wood Lodge is a sweet pretty retired situation, but neither the house nor park are of any great extent when compared with Alverston; but it has some singular advantages. Like this place it is partly encompassed by an elegant little village; to which Mr. Mortimer, in imitation of Sir Edward Stanley, whose character he particularly venerates, has drawn a set of very agreeable people, and the river which runs beyond it, is well replenished with most excellent fish of various kinds. It is situated mid-way between Alverston Park and Oakley Hill, and forms a triangle with this place and

Hawthorn Grove; which, it seems, is Mr. Slayton's inducement to think of making it his residence; though he is so fond of Oakley Hill that he cannot persuade himself to quit it entirely. Hawthorn Grove, now the alterations are completed, is said to excel even Alverston Park, which I can hardly suppose. The last time of my being in Derbyshire I did not see it, and the time before it was all pulling to pieces: yet I then thought it a delightful spot, though not equal to Alverston. I have before told you we are to make a visit there.

Soon after our alighting, your letter was put into my hands. I thank you for it, Maria, but I am much concerned that you are prevented coming to us: concerned for the *cause* as well as the effect. As soon as Mrs. Stanhope's greatly wished-for recovery takes place, we hope to see you in Derbyshire.

With yours, I received a letter from my sister. She tells me she is going with Lady Blurton and the *Honorable Miss Barbara Tupps* to Aldborough in Suffolk; Lady Blurton being advised by her physicians to use sea-bathing for a violent eruption in her face; which Rachel says, quite disfigures her. But of this you have, I suppose, had an account at Woodstock.

On Monday we are to dine at Hawthorn Grove, where we are to be joined by Mr. Slayton, who is to return with us and set off, with Mr. Stanley, for London on Tuesday. Mr. Evelyn goes at the same time for—*Oxford*, Maria; not for *Woodstock*; though he will probably call there. And this is all I will say upon that subject, at this period. I am afraid of you. You are a little critic. I thought when I was writing to *you* I might with perfect unreserve; but find I was mistaken.

* * * * *

At the word mistaken I laid aside my pen and went down stairs, when I was informed Sir Charles Conway had received a letter from Miss Howard, who is at Harborough Hall, requesting to know if he can give her any intelligence, about her sister; she having received a very alarming letter from her by one of the servants who attended her at Yarmouth, and from him, some intimation respecting Sir Charles Conway, which puzzles her still more than even the letter.

Miss Howard has written in so pathetic a style and her character is so exalted that Sir Charles has determined to go to Harborough—Mrs. Digby you are to understand, having quitted the kingdom—to acquaint Miss Howard with such of the circumstances relative to the infamous conduct of her sister, as are necessary for her to know; and this he chuses to do in person, rather than by letter, out of respect to this truly excellent woman; therefore, intending first to write to her, he means to set out with the rest of the gentlemen on Tuesday morning.

For some days we shall probably be a reduced party; as Sir Charles will from Harborough take a turn to Coventry, near which place he has an estate that wants inspecting. But I fancy we shall be very busy, as Lady Stanley thinks of commissioning Mr. Stanley to order down some patterns for cloaths for the approaching wedding of our dear Emma, though she absolutely forbids what she calls such a hasty procedure; but I believe she will be over-ruled.

Tell my dear mother I mean to be very extravagant upon the occasion; therefore request she will be so kind as to convey to me the two bank notes, one of forty pounds the other of thirty, which

are in the slip in my writing bureau.

When I left Woodstock I had but little thought of this event, or I should have been better provided for it. I likewise, and that through forgetfulness, left behind the pearl roses for my shoes. Mr. Evelyn will not I dare say think it any trouble to put the little box, at the request of my mother or aunt, into his pocket.

Emma's affectionate respects finish my letter.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, VII.

MR. MAYNARD, TO MRS. MAYNARD.

Bedford, April 20th.

Stopping at this place, my dear Harriet, and having occasion to open the chaise-trunk, I found I had left behind me the parcel of papers I last night received from Lord Danvers. I cannot imagine how they escaped my recollection when I packed up the parchments.

Let them be sent by to-morrow's mail-coach, directed to me at Mr. Broomley's, where I must wait their arrival; as without them I cannot proceed with Tomkins.

You will not forget to forward Bailey's affidavit to the same place, if it reaches you before Thursday.

That I shall write to you frequently, and that you will let me hear from you as often as possible, is the chief pleasure I expect till I see you again, save what the peaceful abode of my reverend Kildwick friend promises.

Adieu, my dearest Harriet.
Yours ever faithfully,
AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, VIII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Tuesday morning, April 21st.

I Was this morning summoned to an early breakfast; Mr. Slayton being very impatient to begin his journey to London. We met in the library by seven o'clock, and before eight the gentlemen left us. Sir Charles Conway for Harborough; Mr. Stanley and his godfather for town; *and*, Maria, Mr. Evelyn for Oxford—*shire*. Now, do not think—but I care not. Think what you please. All I have to say about the matter is, that—That what? Why I do not know; for if, after all, he should only—Well, I cannot help it; and it would be folly to deny it; therefore may as well acknowledge that I think Mr. Evelyn is one of the most worthy and agreeable characters amongst my acquaintance.

And so now to other matters.

Sir Edward and Lady Stanley are gone to pay a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Layton; Emma is writing to Lady Davison, and I will amuse myself with giving you an account of our yesterday's engagements, which surely were the most agreeable the world could offer.

Sir Charles Conway left Alverston on Sunday morning; and Mr. Evelyn dined at the

Rectory, with four or five respectable farmers, but returned to the Park in the evening. Our going to Hawthorn Grove was finally settled before Sir Charles left us, therefore, according to the purposed plan, we arose at six in the morning, and, not long after, were seated in the carriages—Sir Edward and Lady Stanley in the chaise; in the coach, Emma; George; myself, and—you know who.

The sky was clear and the morning warm. Could we then be otherwise than pleasant!

We were received at Hawthorn Grove with the most expressive welcome by its master, who conducted us into the breakfast-room, where we found Sir John and Lady Seymour; Lady Morden; Colonel Jenkinson, and Miss Sparkes: and, soon after, there arrived Mr. and Mrs. Browne; Miss Letty Stanford; Mr. Mrs. and the two Miss Brookes; Lady Catherine Villars and Mr. Edgar.

Sir Charles was determined to celebrate his Emma's return to Hawthorn Grove. At his request, Lady Stanley was mistress of the ceremonies; but Miss Fanny Brooke and myself made tea and coffee; her ladyship presiding at the chocolate tray. A more elegant private breakfast was never given to any company. The urns; trays; waiters, and canisters, were all of silver, engraved with Sir Charles's arms; the china was *beautiful*; in short, the whole equipage was handsome beyond any one I ever saw.

Breakfast was not over till near twelve, after which, Lady Catherine Villars insisted upon having a dance; music was therefore ordered, and to dancing we went; but the weather for the season was so warm, and the morning so inviting, that every one soon began to wish for a walk in the pleasure-grounds; and accordingly we gave over dancing and sallied forth.

And now, Maria, I want to lead you step by step through the enchanting glades; groves, and gardens, which encompass the elegant structure inhabited by Sir Charles Conway; but I despair of giving you the least adequate idea of their beauty. I thought myself, the whole day through, in Fairy-Land. Never before did I wander in such fascinating scenes. The house too is entirely altered. I should not have known it to have been the same I saw when I was last in the same place. Every thing in it, and about it, is finished in the highest style of elegance to please Miss Stanley's taste. What, as Sir Charles whispered me, during our walk, was his distress when he had reason to think she would probably never see what had been done entirely upon her account! To speak a paradox—the more he was pleased, the more he was *dis*-pleased with all around him.

Emma, throughout the day, appeared very much affected and sweetly softened at the proofs every spot afforded of Sir Charles's endeavour to accommodate and entertain her. It is now a considerable time since she was at Hawthorn Grove; for previous to the short-lived triumph of that Mrs. Digby and the horrid Greville, (who, by the bye, has, we hear, taken his leave of England) her natural delicacy made her backward to visit there; though in company with Sir Edward and Lady Stanley; which reluctance I have sometimes thought she too much indulged.

Once in the morning I overheard her confess to Sir Charles (who had I believe been telling her that her acceptance of what had been done was the highest reward he could receive) that if her sense of his affection and sedulity for her happiness, was to be considered as payment, she was, in no degree, his debtor.

She spoke in a tender accent, and he received her acknowledgement with expressions of rapture.

Soon after this, she came up to me, for we, at that time, were walking in the wilderness and said with a sigh—"Oh, Charlotte! Charlotte! why did I come to Hawthorn Grove! My heart was before oppressed by a sense of obligation; but my gratitude now overwhelms me, and I have no power to oppose my affection."

Sir Charles and Mr. Stanley were that instant seen on the other side a row of shrubs. They heard the sentence and came forward; the happy lover, dropping upon one knee, seized and kissed the trembling hand of our blushing friend, while George, with a lively air, telling his sister she had won his heart, led me off to the next avenue, and began a discourse about Maria Birtles, confessing he was all alive to the hope of hearing something about her by means of the people who were probably left in Mrs. Douglas's house in Grosvenor Square.

He was going on in a strain of extasy, when we were joined by Lady Stanley and Mr. Evelyn (for at this period the company seemed all divided into parties) which put a stop to our conversation.

To carry you through the beautiful verdant windings and over the particular fine terrace that lead to the centre of the celebrated grove which gives its name to the Seat (so as to convey to you the least adequate idea of the charms of the place) is far beyond the powers of my language. Nothing short of the famed arcadian scenes can equal Hawthorn Grove. The temples in different parts of the gardens; the alcoves; grottos; the pavilion—But what am I doing! The very thing I had determined to avoid—endeavouring to describe the beauties of a scene which must be injured by the attempt. Royalty itself might be suitably accommodated in the superb and enchanting abode of Sir Charles Conway.

Did you never Maria hear it observed that time in wretchedness seems doubly long;—When spent in agreeable amusement, particularly flitting;—and again lengthened in our imagination, when passed in deep and real happiness? The reason given for the last change, is, that every moment is so strongly marked, it rests in our idea.

This solves the wonder of my thinking that the day at Hawthorn Grove seemed one of the longest I ever lived. When we returned, it appeared as if we had near a week been absent. Indeed it was the general sentiment of our party. Even Emma made the acknowledgement.

Our dinner and evening's entertainments, at which we had a large encrease of company, were in conformity with the amusements of the morning, and with the truly elegant taste and magnificent spirit of Sir Charles Conway, who himself directed the whole.

I the other day said that I thought Mr. Maynard one of the most complete fine gentleman I ever beheld; and *one* of the most he may be, but I think Sir Charles stands, in that particular, without an equal: even Mr. Stanley seems half veiled by the comparison. Yet see him by himself—and who would think him a second to any first! Lady Catherine Villars who professes greatly (it has been said particularly) to admire Sir Charles observed to me that whoever saw and knew him must think it impossible for any woman existing to merit his affection; but that when Miss Stanley appeared,

every beholder would give *her* to him and *him* to her. If Lady Catharine *be* sensible of a particular partiality, her acknowledgement was a generous one; but she is so volatile there is no discovering her real sentiments. Indeed throughout the day the superiority of our lovely friend was strikingly conspicuous. The beauty of her person; the native vivacity of her mind, so enchantingly softened by the sweetness of her temper and manners, occasioned the above observation to be made by more than Lady Catharine Villars.

Just before dinner, in the half hour usually thought so awkward, Sir Edward moved our going into the music-room, where we were most harmoniously entertained till dinner was announced. Almost every one was, in turn a performer. Amongst the Ladies, Miss Stanley and Miss Fanny Peirson were eminently distinguished, upon the forte piano. Lady Catherine Villars touched the guittar; which she accompanied with her voice to admiration. Mr. Stanley blew the german flute; and the little concert was closed with a most melodious voluntary upon the organ, by Sir Charles Conway: previous to which he sang a lively air to Lady Catharine's guittar; in which she was, likewise, a vocal assistant.

The evening of this happy day was concluded in dancing; card-playing &c. We had not any formal supper, but in one of the apartments were some side-boards; with several tables for tea; coffee &c. Wine; negus; rich cakes of divers kinds; sweetmeats, foreign and english; wet and dry; creams; jellies and fruit; with one board of cold chicken; potted meats, &c. &c. completed the viands.

But it will not be to any purpose to go on with this subject; for were I to write upon it a week, I should still have much to say; therefore I will finish it abruptly.

* * * * *

This Emma is very impertinent. She has been insisting upon reading my letter, and pretending to be angry, is gone, she says, to give you some intelligence respecting *my* engagements of yesterday.

But pray now do not credit her. That is if she—ah Maria! I am half afraid of Emma now. She is *so* alive: so—so—what would I say? I know not, and must conclude with requesting you to believe my heart is with you all at Woodstock.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, IX.

MISS STANLEY, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston Park, April the 21st.

AND so, Maria, this Charlotte of ours is over head and ears in love. True as that I exist to tell you so. The young preacher has stolen her heart, though the gipsy will not own it quite so fairly as she ought to do. Yesterday afforded her a charming opportunity to allow, without much particularity of his

tendresse. I gave many a sly look towards the happy pair, and every time observed her countenance was dressed in smiles, and that her soft eyes were doubly full of vivacity and sweetness; while his reverence evidently showed the satisfaction his heart experienced.

In good truth Maria, this Evelyn is a charming fellow. It is well matters have so turned out that I am not violently inclined to dispute her conquest; for, let me tell you, such a prize would have put our friendship to a trial. Yet I will honestly confess I fear I should not have stood much chance in the contest, for he seems so fascinated by her speaking looks and lively artless manners, that I believe no other witchcraft would have been successful. *As sure as a gun* he is gone into Oxfordshire purposely to solicit permission to address this little Phenix. Mind now and let me know all about it, that I may have the pleasure and consequence of first imparting to her the circumstance. I shall be mortified if she has prior information of it through any other medium.

But Maria—though I will not be so unpolite as *absolutely* to contradict all that Charlotte has advanced, I must warn you not to believe the whole; for she has multiplied and magnified to a most enormous degree. I mean when she has been talking about myself; for as to Sir Charles Conway — But I believe I may as well avoid the subject, for (how it comes about I know not) I find such an increase of an undefinable something when I mention his name that I am quite alarmed. It seems allied to reverence, I think; but perhaps connoisseurs in the sentiment would give it a softer epithet. There was a time in which I hardly knew my own mind. There was a time when I did not deem a certain conquest absolutely invaluable. Careless—volatile—excentric—I did not know that I—But enough. Come, my amiable friend, come to Alverston. Come and see Charlotte grown gay, and Emma grave. This love—if *love it be*—works different effects in different dispositions. What, I wonder, will it do when it pervades the gentle bosom of my dear Doctor Griffith's little dove! But it never can make her otherwise than truly amiable; nor can it, with all its magical effects, change me from being her fervently affectionate friend,

EMMA STANLEY.

LETTER, X.

MR. STANLEY, TO SIR CHARLES CONWAY.

Grosvenor Square, April 23d.

Congratulate me. Pronounce me the happiest of mankind. Presume not to make any comparison between yourself and me.

Charles! Charles! I am transported almost beyond my reason, and can scarce believe I tread on earth. The harmony of the spheres is heard around. I breathe pure aether; and the summum bonum of all beneath the spangled arch is mine.

To say all in one sentence—*MARIA IS FOUND*. She is found, and *will be—shall be*—is my own, notwithstanding all you can alledge: notwithstanding all the world can oppose. Yet mind you—it will be necessary [you deserve to be plagued about this matter, Conway, for ever daring to object to my pursuit of this angelic charmer] that I appear to fall in with my godfather's views,

respecting Lady Caroline Pemberton. I must even (so far has he engaged me) make the lady herself believe I am devoted to her charms. But be not alarmed: I mean soon to throw off every veil; for though the lovely charmer of my heart cannot indeed be Mrs. Stanley, I am unalterably determined never to marry any other; however strong the inducement.

And now, Charles, I must prohibit your writing to me. I *will not* have any of your preachments: besides I hope ere long to see you. And *then*, Charles—and THEN—! with what pleasure do I anticipate the surprise—the astonishment you will be under at the blaze of beauty I shall exhibit.

GEORGE STANLEY.

LETTER, XI.

MR. STANLEY, TO MISS STANLEY.

Grosvenor Square, April 23d.

WE arrived in London, my dear sister, so early as nine o'clock yesterday morning; Mr. Slayton and myself being equally impatient to reach the end of our journey. We were both set down in the place from whence I date, but my diligent godfather soon hastened to Gray's Inn to enquire about the business of transfers, &c. and left me to follow my own concerns, which to me appeared to be of moment: but I hunted and hunted for two hours to no purpose. I could not gain any lights, sister.

“Of what?” you will ask. Of a flitting star—Of an ignis fatuus—Of a WITCH, my dear Emma, who has charmed away my tranquility.

But to have done with riddles—Mr. Slayton returned to Grosvenor Square just before dinner, which he had desired might be ready at half past two, and he was obeyed. I must confess I was rather displeased with his officious haste in claiming the promise I had given him of suffering myself to be introduced into the company of Lady Caroline Pemberton. I had expressly stipulated that it should be as if by accident, and that I would not be presented to her in any manner the least particular; therefore when he told me that he had engaged me to drink tea at Mr. Maynard's, where Lady Caroline spends chief part of her time, I was greatly disposed to quarrel with him, and to refuse going: but he a little moderated me by informing me that calling in at St. James's Square he was introduced to Mrs. Maynard, as the gentleman was from home, and that she so cordially invited him to spend the evening with herself and Lady Caroline, that he could not refuse; particularly as upon his telling her I came with him up to town, she requested his carrying me to be of the party. I therefore acceded to the proposal, and soon after five, the time appointed by Mrs. Maynard, we were driven to St. James's Square, where I was introduced to the celebrated daughter of the Earl of Danvers. His lordship, than whom I scarce ever saw a finer gentleman, was present. In his person he is extremely handsome; in his manners, perfectly polite. With respect to the young lady—I must acknowledge her beauty is equal to all the descriptions I ever received of it; and her mental qualifications have been as justly depicted. I declared my admiration of this phenomenon; and while she and Mrs. Maynard went, for about twenty minutes, to make a first visit to the new Lady Lorimer, it being the last day of her ceremonials, I made my proposals to the Earl, which with

answerable candour he accepted, and when the ladies returned, presented me to his angelic daughter as one whom he honored with his approbation. The lovely creature blushed; but not with disdain. I attempted to speak of the happiness I experienced in that hour, but could only blunder about my meaning; for words came not readily to hand. Mrs. Maynard addressed me as her cousin elect, and every one seemed happy; so you see, Emma, matters are already *in a train*, and it is possible that I shall very soon present you with a sister; who, let me not forget to say, sends her compliments to Miss Lawson.

Mr. Maynard is gone to take some measures relative to a roguish steward of Lord Danvers' in the North. It was therefore proposed by my godfather, and acceded to by all the party, that Mrs. Maynard, should write and desire him to stop at Oakley Hill; and that the earl; Lady Caroline; Mrs. Maynard, and myself should accompany Mr. Slayton down, and give at his house, Mr. Maynard a meeting; and this morning at breakfast—for I was in St. James Square before nine—her ladyship expressed a wish to call at Alverston Park in our way; being desirous to make there her first visit.

What think you child of this celebrated beauty's condescension? Does it not appear to you very extraordinary?

"Yes, to be sure" you say, " and I do not believe what you are telling me."

It is however madam sister, very true; and on *our* part of the party it is settled that we are to go very soon to the Park, and that Sir Edward and her ladyship; Miss Lawson and young Clericus; yourself and your baronet, are to accompany us to Oakley Hill; where, as I before said, we are to be joined by Mr. Maynard. Of the time of our setting out, you shall have due notice, that you girls may have all your rigging in order.

I mean to write to Evelyn, for I know where a letter will find him—and that is more than Charlotte does—to accelerate his return, that he may not be absent from Alverston when we go down. His business at Woodstock cannot I think, fail of being soon completed; as the letter of introduction to Mrs. Lawson which my mother gave him—But faith! if I do not take care I shall make the affair public; and I would not do that on any account. No, no: I shall continue true to my trust, I can tell you: therefore pray do not expect any intimation of the matter from me.

My godfather sends his love to you all; particularly to Miss Lawson. I have some idea that he means to endeavour to supplant the young Rector.

Tell my father the upholster thinks he shall complete every thing in this house next week. Upon my word it will, when finished, be a truly elegant habitation.

GEORGE STANLEY.

LETTER, XII.

MR. STANLEY, TO MISS LAWSON.

Grosvenor Square, April the 23d.

I Have so often, my dear Miss Lawson, made you an auditor to my plainings, that common gratitude urges me to refresh your ideas with an account of my present felicity. But mind that you keep my secret, for what I have to say is to me of the greatest consequence, and must not be known by any but those to whom I chuse to make the communication.

I have been writing a very fine piece of rodomontade to my sister about Lady Caroline Pemberton; which will serve to amuse my friends in Derbyshire till I dare acquaint them with the true state of my present situation, which is happy far beyond my powers of description, for Charlotte, my dear Charlotte! I have found MY MARIA—found her under the roof of a female cousin who admitted me to her presence upon my first request.

Need I, after this, say any more to convince you that I think myself one of the happiest sons of mortality! Oh! I am blessed beyond my highest hopes; for the dear, lovely creature is not inexorable.

But I forbear to unfold my purpose. Let the tale of Lady Caroline Pemberton puzzle my sister till my happiness is nearer its completion.

If I be frustrated in my present views, adieu to sublunary felicity.

As to you, Miss Lawson—! His Reverence is gone to Woodstock with such credentials!—But I must not betray my mother's secrets; and so I have told my sister: yet being happy myself, I am desirous of reviving, with a few grains of comfort, a sighing, and perhaps a despairing fellow-creature.

G.S.

LETTER, XIII.

MRS. MAYNARD, TO AUGUSTUS MAYNARD, ESQ.

St. James's Square, April the 23d.

MY short note of Tuesday and my letter of last night, you will, I hope, duly receive. In the latter, I gave you information of the arrival of Mr. Slayton and his godson.

I could not then be particular, nor had I indeed, at that period, much to say; but I will now endeavour to give you some accounts of the “events of the day.”

Soon after I received a card from the senior—or rather, soon after he received my answer—he made his appearance in St. James's Square.

To prevent the probability of his being seen by our cousin, I ordered him to be ushered into the little study, where I attended him. We were soon acquainted, and soon entered into business. Your visit to him at Oakley Hill introduced the subject, and in a quarter of an hour all preliminaries were settled. He engaged to bring his godson to afternoon tea, and I fixed the time soon after five, as Caroline and I had agreed to go in the evening to Lady Lorimer's; which circumstance I was pleased with, as I wished her to be in full dress when first seen by Mr. Stanley in her own character. After Mr. Slayton left me, I sat in a reverie, anticipating the pleasure I should receive from the surprise of the interested parties; but recollecting myself, I ordered the carriage to be drawn up, and was driven to Berkley Square, where finding his Lordship at leisure, I requested him to be present at the scene; to which he readily agreed, and seemed greatly to enjoy the idea of his lovely daughter's ensuing happiness; being convinced, as indeed every one who knows all circumstances must be, that Lady Caroline and Mr. Stanley had imbibed for each other the most disinterested and fervent affection. At coming away I put into his hands the letters her ladyship wrote me from Woodstock, which as he afterwards told me, made him apprehend the scene might be too affecting to both the parties to be exhibited before witnesses, without some preparation; however as we were all interested, I thought it might be hazarded, and that it would be right each should be convinced of the others affection in a manner which such an unexpected meeting would make incontestable.

His lordship agreed to my sentiments, and we waited the event with impatience.

I ordered dinner earlier than usual, and after it was over, asked Caroline to go with me into my dressing-room, to give *her* directions to Woodward relative to a fancy part of my dress which I wanted for the evening. This employed her while I went down to receive the earl. Matters were then all adjusted, and I returned to finish my dress; but not wishing her ladyship to go with me into the drawing-room, threw a book in her way, which I thought would engage her attention. It did; and I left her absorbed in reading.

I think I never saw our Caroline look more lovely. Her dress was particularly elegant and becoming, and her eyes were more than usually full of fire and sweetness; owing perhaps to the conversation I had designedly engaged her in about the Alverston family. She was without powder; her hair in small curls and ringlets, and her head ornamented with pearls and Italian flowers. Altogether, a more angelic appearance than this lovely creature now made, never met the organs of sight.

When I went into the drawing-room I found Lord Danvers re-perusing the letters I had given him in the morning, and it was then we had the short conversation I just now mentioned, and which was interrupted by the arrival of the expected gentlemen. Mr. Slayton entered first. I introduced him to the earl. Mr. Stanley then advanced, whom Mr. Slayton introduced in great form to me, and then, in the same manner, to his lordship; who received him with expressive looks of approbation.

Notwithstanding the high opinion I had imbibed of this young gentleman's person and address from your description, my ideas of him fell short of the reality. But not to multiply words unnecessarily—he struck me in a moment as being the very counterpart of Lady Caroline: and that I

think is as high an eulogium as can be given.

After they had been a few minutes seated, I stepped up-stairs and found my cousin still reading; therefore, wishing to have a little chat with the gentlemen, I left her, telling her I would send for her when tea was ready, and returned to the drawing-room.

The ensuing conversation was animated: every one seeming in good humour. Mr. Stanley said many brilliant and very just things. The earl appeared highly pleased with him. Mr. Slayton was all attention, and Mrs. Maynard all prate. In truth, I could not resist a more than usual inclination to volubility. At times I fancied Mr. Stanley's countenance was over-cast, and I was ready to conjecture he was ruminating upon Maria Birtles; as he frequently sighed very deeply.

Occasionally, I mentioned our intended visit to Lady Lorimer; telling the gentlemen we did not expect to be more than twenty minutes absent, and hoped they would excuse our going; for which there was a kind of necessity; it being her ladyship's last day, &c. Upon this the earl kindly observed, that as he considered St. James's Square as one of his *homes*, he would do himself the honor to look upon himself *as one of the visited*; which he hoped would make my excuses the more admissible. We all bowed to his lordship; some compliments passed, and then, as I intended, Lady Lorimer's whimsical courtship was adverted to. This led (which was the end of my design) to the subject of romantic affection, on which every one present said something. Then pray, asked I, upon a dissenting remark of Mr. Stanley's to a dainty speech of mine, what, in your opinion, *is real affection*?

"My opinion of real affection, madam," said he with animation, his face in a glow, "is that sympathy which arises in congenial minds; not perhaps at first sight, but upon a short acquaintance; without any regard to interest or convenience; or even a thought about any coming event."

But, said I, would you shut prudence entirely from your view?

"Not," replied he, "when I contemplated a permanent union. I should then wish prudence to accompany—though not to constitute my attachment; and for this reason chiefly: It would be a probable mean to unite the friends of the lady I should wish to call mine, with my own; which could hardly fail of encreasing our happiness, because it would make its circle more diffusive; a consideration that must give additional pleasure to a benevolent mind; else, conjugal felicity, confined within domestic bounds—But I ask your pardon. I am running into lengths."

Go on, sir, said I; your sentiments are excellent. But do you fancy you shall carry them through life?

"By your question, madam," replied my hero, "you think they are the sentiments *of a young man*. Pardon me," added he, "if I aver that I know no reason why I should not retain them when I arrive *at years of discretion*. But permit my appealing to these gentlemen. They must, by this time, know something of the matter."

Mr. Stanley spoke with an air of perfect good humour; though I do not know whether he was not a little hurt by my question. Perhaps because it might somewhat strengthen his godfather's

arguments; as it led to an idea that I opposed his sentiments; which, as you will suppose, was very far from being the case.

The carrying in of tea interrupted the subject. Lord Danvers asked, as he had done once before, what Caroline was doing. I told him she was rather engaged, but would attend at tea; I then sent up to her my compliments, and requested her company in the drawing-room; desiring the servant to tell her his lordship was below. This, as I expected, brought her immediately. We heard her advancing, and every eye turned towards the door, when the servant opened it and in came the lovely girl.

Lady Caroline Pemberton—said I to Mr. Stanley as soon as she appeared, while she was hastening to her father; but her eyes were arrested by the figure of Mr. Stanley, who stood near him; at which she started, and looked around her in amazement; the beautiful pink in her cheeks being heightened to a crimson; while her heart, as she afterwards confessed, throbbed so violently she thought it would have prevented her drawing breath.

What I relate of the sentiments of the actors in this comedy, you will conclude I gathered from their after-communications; as I could not, being myself so much interested, even endeavour to guess them at the time: but I weave them into my account to make it the more complete, as I think you will wish to entertain with it your reverend friend and his little Alethea.

When Caroline saw Mr. Slayton, she concluded it was known at Alverston that she was Maria Birtles, and that they were come with the apologising compliments of the family. She therefore endeavoured—but it was only an endeavour—to compose herself, that she might receive them as became her father's daughter.

All this time Mr. Stanley stood fixed in astonishment, with looks expressive of contending ideas. When Lady Caroline first entered, the universal brilliancy of her figure attracted general notice. Mr. Stanley looked in wonder, as if at her beauty, but in a moment his eye recognized her features, and instead of approaching her, he started back several steps and exclaimed in a tone of the wildest surprise—"Heavens and earth! Who do I see!" Then springing forward as if going to take her hand—"But it cannot be any other. It *must* be—it *is* my beloved Maria." Then again stopping, as if the seeming impossibility made him doubt—"Yet how *can* it be! My Lord—Mrs. Maynard"—in almost a frenzy: but seeing my cousin smile, he flew towards her; bent his knee, and caught her hand, which he pressed to his lips with the utmost ardour.

"Lovely vision!" said he, "enchanted heavenly maid! By what name—what title am I to address you! Yet that concerns me not. I see you again—I hold your hand in mine. For all the rest I care not. MARIA BIRTLES has been the object of my pursuit: the sole object of my thoughts and of my tenderest affection."

"But what am I saying?"—Then rising up—"perhaps I have been too unguarded. How concerned shall I be if"—and he looked his apprehension of having said too much; an idea arising of the possibility of the earl's not being acquainted with the circumstances of his daughter's retirement. This his lordship observed, and wishing to relieve his fears, stepped between him and Caroline, and taking Mr. Stanley by the hand — "Accept, sir," said he, "as the representative of your House, my

most grateful acknowledgements for the protection my dear fugitive found at Alverston, when under a persecution unworthy her character to suffer, or mine to occasion. But she has been so good as to forgive me; though I do not know that I can ever forgive myself.”

“Oh my dear sir!” said our cousin to her father, reclining her face upon his shoulder, “you oppress me by your kindness and condescension. What return can I make—”

“What return can we both make,” interrupted the earl, “to this gentleman for the obligations we are under to his family? Say, Caroline, what must we do?”

“My—my thanks”—replied the blushing beauty—“My warmest gratitude is all—is all”—

“And are you then, my dearest girl, so poor in your expedients?”—again interrupted his lordship. “Well then I must request Mr. Stanley [turning to him] to make his own demand.”

Encouraged by the earl’s looks, with a countenance of increased vivacity, Mr. Stanley replied—“But that I dare not presume, my Lord, or I *could* point out a reward which would lay me, and all of my race, under the most unreturnable of all obligations.”

Upon this, as the sentiments of both had been sufficiently demonstrated, Lord Danvers, to give general relief by an early eclaireissement, turned to his daughter and said—“Dare you, Caroline, after what is past, trust me with the direction of your choice?”

“My dear sir!”—was all the lovely girl could say.

“I know your worth, my child,”—the earl continued—“and think I shall not wrong your value if I give you here”—taking her reluctant—yet, from the surprise, half resisting—hand, and putting it into one of Mr. Stanley’s, whose looks—whose words—whose manner upon the occasion, it would be folly to attempt to give any description of. Every attitude and feature declared his extasy. He spoke not. He could not speak. His soul seemed too large for its bounds. I never saw joy so strikingly expressed. Dropping on one knee, he silently received the truly inestimable boon, which he again pressed to his lips, with a mixture of tenderness and respect. Then arose: then thanked the earl in unconnected sentences; when seeing Lady Caroline so affected by the expressive kindness of a father she so greatly loves; and by the evident happiness of a man to whom—to speak in plain terms—she has long ago given her heart, that she could hardly support herself, he put one arm round her, and gently drawing her from Lord Danvers, who looked delighted, he seated her upon a sofa, and again kneeling before her, endeavoured, for her sake, to be more composed; yet expressed his happiness and acknowledgements in the tenderest and most impassioned words of language. Lady Caroline looked sweetly confused, yet lost not her native dignity, though scarce able to speak. At length, at her entreaty, Mr. Stanley arose; he then seated himself upon the sofa by her, while the almost equally happy father sat down on her other side.

It is inconceivably strange that your uncle—loving this angel-daughter of his as he always did, with the greatest warmth of affection—could ever enter into such a league against her with that hideous Lord Crumpford. However when a man is possessed by the demon of gaming, there is no saying what sacrifices he will not make.

But to continue my story.

You are not to suppose that during the scene I have been describing, Mr. Slayton and I were absolutely mutes; though it must be confessed we spoke more by our actions than by language. I was all attention; he astonishment.

When Lady Caroline first entered the room, the old gentleman was evidently struck with admiration. For a few moments he stared in silence, and then exclaimed—"An angel! if ever there was one upon earth!"

Mr. Stanley's agitation next attracted his notice. He stood absorbed till he heard him pronounce the name of Maria Birtles, and then coming to me with his eyes enlarged, cried out—"Upon my soul and so it is. How, madam—how is this! Who is that young woman now before us?"

The lady you see, Mr. Slayton, said I, is Lady Caroline Pemberton; daughter to the Earl of Danvers.

"Well, but how then!"—

Have patience, sir, and the riddle shall be unfolded.

He again was absorbed in attention till he comprehended the whole, and when he understood it, was at a loss how to express his sentiments of surprise and joy. His head was turned upon first one; then another; and he looked *so pleased*, that a by-stander might have judged him to have been the happiest being in the room.

As to myself—I even fairly sat down and cried. However I was not observed, and being ashamed of such an expression of the interest I took in my dear Caroline's happiness, started up and began to rally Mr. Slayton upon his former jealousy of *Miss Stanley's waiting maid*, as he confessed his having been afraid of her while in that capacity, and that his fear of his godson's forming an attachment with her, was a reason, added to some others, for his hastening him towards matrimony.

This was a smiling topic with us, at times, during the whole evening: the delighted squire often saying to my cousin—"Faith, madam, I did not much like you, I can promise you. I knew—I knew you were exactly to George's taste. Let me tell you I took more notice of you than you supposed; and faith I thought you were much too handsome for a chambermaid; and I was glad, madam, when I found you had taken your flight; little thinking I myself should so soon and so warmly join in chace of you."

The old gentlemen was vastly pleased to take occasions of bringing in those retrospective kind of ideas, which occasioned us considerable pleasantries.

As soon as we were sufficiently composed, I rang for attendants, and we drank tea, after which Caroline and I went to Lady Lorimer's, leaving the three gentlemen to settle their business; which, it seems, they did highly to the satisfaction of every party; Mr. Slayton offering in Sir Edward

Stanley's name and his own, such proposals as Lord Danvers could only object to from their too great liberality. However affairs were soon adjusted, and Mr. Slayton, who loves to dabble in law-business, minuted down the particulars, that the settlements might be engrossed as soon as possible; every one of the trio being impatient to have matters brought to a conclusion expeditiously.

When we returned, Lord Danvers desired an audience of me, in which he communicated the above particulars, and I made a re-communication of them to Lady Caroline, who appeared to be almost frightened out of her wits at the idea of their driving on so hastily; and averse to the thought of returning to the drawing-room: however, partly by laughing at, and partly by soothing her, I prevailed with her to go down, where the affectionate; the tender; the respectful reception she met with from her father; Mr. Stanley, and the Squire of Oakley Hill, soon reconciled her to herself, and, at length, to their measures, and after as pleasant an evening as I ever spent in your absence, she was *half* prevailed upon to agree to a scheme proposed by Mr. Slayton, and seconded by the rest of us, of giving you the meeting at Oakley Hill in your return from Cumberland; therefore our time of setting out on the journey, so particularly agreeable to me (which consideration I know quickened the dear girl's compliance) depends on your telling us when you expect to be able to reach the Squire's mansion.

When we had retired, and were about to part for the night—"Harriet—my dear Harriet!" said Caroline, with a deep sigh, "I am *happy*. I *acknowledge* myself to be happy, and yet—"

Yet *what*, Caroline? Why *yet*? And why that very heavy sigh?

"I cannot tell," said she, sighing still more deeply, "but I seem oppressed."

And can you wonder at that, my dear girl? asked I. Your mind, though a lively one, is solid. Happiness, in your sense of the word, is greatly beyond mere pleasure. It does not dance upon the surface of your thoughts, but sinks into your *heart*, and must return *from thence*, before it can brighten into a smile congenial to your features. But go to bed, my dear, and try to sleep, while I spend an hour in giving Mr. Maynard the occurrences of the day past.

"Well, but do not tell him how foolish I am, Harriet," said our cousin.

The condition of my compliance, returned I, must be your growing wiser.

"Tell him what you will then," said she in a pet, "but he knows too much already:"—for, as you may suppose, I had informed her how it came about that Mr. Slayton brought Mr. Stanley to St. James's Square.

Apropos. The time we were gone to Lady Lorimer's, the circumstance of Mr. Stanley's finding his own miniature at Hazle-wood Lodge; the chace, the false attribution of it led him after Lady Lucinda Harrington; his discovering it to be MARIA BIRTLES' performance by means of the letter she sent Lady Stanley, which showed the identity of the writing, &c. &c. were all discussed by the three gentlemen; all told to me by his lordship, and by me retold to my cousin; so that the lovers perfectly understood each other, to the exclusion of every pretence to display one atom of Lady-like affectation, had Caroline been disposed to have used any. But let me do this lovely creature the

justice to say she has no affectation in her nature. Pure ingenuousness presides in her disposition; yet the native delicacy of her mind raises a blush at being, by circumstances, so early obliged to make—at least a *tacit* confession of her partiality.

When we talked over the proposed journey to Mr. Slayton's, Lady Caroline was led by gratitude to wish (should the scheme take place) to return her thanks at Alverston, and asked my opinion as to the propriety of our calling at the Park in our way, as it would not be very much out of the line.

I was pleased with the idea, and said, situated as she had been there, and accompanied by Mr. Stanley, it would, under the present circumstances, be so far from being the least inconsistent, that to avoid it she must be chargeable with affectation; false delicacy, or a strange insensibility; and I wondered it did not present itself to my consideration. I therefore promised, upon the full adoption of the plan, to lead a way for her to advance the idea, as I thought it would be best it should appear to originate with herself, it being exactly in character with the ingenuous gratitude of her temper, and would show she was above giving way to mere forms, when any thing superior demanded their being a sacrifice.

At what an enormous rate have I written! How swiftly glides the pen when we are pleased with our subject, and when our hearts are with those we address.

Thus doubly induced, at this time, no wonder that I know not when to stop my hand. In the absence of my dear Augustus, nothing gratifies me so much as writing to him, and no subject more interesting to us both than the happiness of our Caroline. Even now I lay down my pen unwillingly, for I have not yet told you the occurrences of this day. I intended to have written last night, after I parted from Caroline, but was too sleepy. If I have time before the post goes out, I will begin anew; if not, this shall go by itself.

Till I see you, you will live continually in my thoughts. This you doubt not; well knowing you have no competitor in the heart of

YOUR HARRIET.

LETTER, XIV.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Saturday, April 25th, 1789.

THE post-man brought letters to Alverston last evening, which have put Emma and me almost beside ourselves. Sir Charles Conway, likewise, is very much disturbed on the occasion which so greatly perplexes us. What Mr. Stanley can mean is beyond all conjecture.

Sir Charles dined with us yesterday, having returned the evening before, from Harborough, where he left Miss Howard, under great affliction for her sister's vile conduct. Just as Sir Charles reached the Hall, she received a letter from her without any date. He said she declined showing it to

him, but he gathered that the expressions in it were strangely wild; and that she had vowed never to return to England.

Poor vile, unhappy woman! Would she sincerely *repent* I would try to pity her.

But, as I was telling you—Sir Charles Conway dined with us yesterday. Towards evening a letter was brought from Mr. Stanley to Emma with one enclosed for me, which she immediately gave me, and I perused with astonishment; it containing an account of his having found his Maria: but he said that I must keep his secret, he having amused his sister with a rodomontade story, as he calls it, about Lady Caroline Pemberton. I was almost petrified by the contents of this unaccountable letter. What to do I knew not, for we were altogether just set down to the tea-table.

“You look grave, Charlotte,” said Lady Stanley, “but Emma smiles, or I should be alarmed.”—for it was known Miss Stanley’s packet came from George and concluded that mine did likewise.

I coloured like scarlet; upon which it very fortunately entered her ladyship’s mind that Mr. Evelyn was the subject and she immediately exclaimed, —“Sure George has not betrayed a secret! ah Charlotte! that is a conscious blush. Tell me now, candidly, has the rogue said any thing about— But hold; if I do not take care I shall myself be the betrayer, in suspecting him.”

Willing to strengthen an idea which, indeed, had some foundation—How *could* your ladyship, said I join in—But I will not let any body see his impertinence—putting the letter hastily into my pocket.

“Mighty well Miss Charlotte,” with a significant motion of her head, said Lady Stanley; “I shall know how to deal with you by and by. But”—turning to Emma—“pray young lady what has your brother said to *you*?”

And now Maria before I go any farther with that story, I must tell you what her ladyship meant by betraying secrets &c. Yet before this reaches you—and that vexes me not a little—you will know more than I do about the matter. You will know the real business that this man—this Mr. Evelyn—went upon into Oxfordshire: at least if this inconsistent, unaccountable creature has not given me a false alarm. I did not think of that till now. Surely Lady Stanley *did* write such a letter as—But how I puzzle myself! Why yes to be sure she did: for what else, could *she herself* mean by her suspicions! Foolish girl as I am. I began to be in a panic lest it should *not* be so: Yet am no less fluttered when I think that *it is*. Ah Maria! how I betray—how I expose myself!

But attend, and you will find how awkwardly I am circumstanced.

Mr. Stanley in his letter to me, intimates Mr. Evelyn’s being gone to Woodstock *with credentials*, as he phrases it; and hints that Lady Stanley keeps the secret. This he mentions more explicitly to Emma; talking about a letter of introduction from her ladyship to my dear mother; but in both letters whimsically disclaims divulging the secret. Why he wrote to me, I know not; except to torment me. And tormented me *he has* with a vengeance, on all accounts.

And is Mr. Evelyn *indeed* gone to Woodstock! But it must be so. O Maria, in what a flutteration is your poor foolish Charlotte! *If* you do not pity me, *may you* be paid in kind!

And now, if possible will I for a time dismiss all ideas of myself and revert to the subject with which I began.

“What,” asked Lady Stanley of Emma, “has your brother said to you?”

“Your question, my dear madam,” replied Miss Stanley, “cannot, in a few words be answered. But give me leave, and I will read to you a part of his Epistle.”

She did; and surprised us all; for it contained an account of his introduction to Lady Caroline Pemberton; of her beauty and accomplishments; of his having made his proposals in form, and of their being in form accepted. He then says the young lady has been so condescending as to accede to the proposal of coming *with the party* to Mr. Slayton’s to meet Mr. Maynard on his return from a journey into Cumberland; and more than so that she intimated a wish to make her compliments at Alverston in her way thither.

Was there ever any thing, my dear, so astonishing. What can he mean by it! It is impossible he can *expect* to be believed; for even were matters in such a situation as he describes, it could not be imagined that Lady Caroline Pemberton, a perfect stranger to every one of the family at Alverston, could, under such circumstances, think of making a visit here before receiving one from them, and even previous to their having made her any written compliments. And then at so early a period! I have no patience to talk about such an inexplicability. Emma did not read to me till afterwards, that part of George’s letter which related to Mr. Evelyn, because she thought, and she thought justly, it would confuse the conversation, every one being so much taken with the strangeness of the account respecting Lady Caroline Pemberton.

Lady Stanley rather *looked* than *expressed* her surprise; yet could not help saying that so early a visit was more than she expected.

“From such a character as Lady Caroline’s,” said Emma, “I could not have thought it possible. Ingenuousness is a valuable quality, but—” She said no more, though she seemed rather hurt at the strange proceeding.

“We must make allowances,” observed Sir Edward, “for the abruptness of George’s manner of communicating intelligence, as we all know the precipitance of his ideas. His whole letter, at least as far as Emma has read of it, seems enigmatical. What else, my dear,” [to Miss Stanley] “does he say?”

“Nothing, sir,” replied Emma, “of importance to that subject. I have read to you every thing, except a slight hint or two to Miss Lawson, which” [smiling at me] “I reserve for her private hearing,”

“We will have *that* by and by,” said the cheerful Sir Edward Stanley, “and I believe we had best forego any farther comments on this puzzling boy’s epistle, which perhaps was scribbled in an

idle humour, with little more design than to amuse you; though it must be confessed it is not a proper theme to jest upon: but he has an exuberance of spirits which will not always be confined within proper bounds.”

Every one was silently attentive, for no one knew what to say, when Sir Edward continued—“There is one part of his letter more unintelligible than the rest. What is it he says about a witch and an ignis fatuus? I cannot comprehend his meaning?”

“My dear sir,” now joined in Sir Charles, who hitherto had sat nearly silent, with looks, I thought, expressive of vexation, “at present let this matter drop. You know my friend’s vivacity. You likewise know he loves to play with the curiosity of these ladies:” [smiling upon Emma and me] “The party, of which Lady Caroline is one, may or may not be coming into Derbyshire. If *not*—his motive for the fabricated tale will appear. If they come—the circumstances of their inducement are, doubtless, such as will justify them to the strictest decorum, or Lady Caroline would not, I dare aver, agree to the proposal.”

Every one looked upon Sir Charles with approbation, and he continued—

“I will write to Mr. Stanley and request his explicitness. Let us wait his answer; and till it arrives, think no more of that part of the letter received.”

Sir Charles’s motion was unanimously agreed to, and Sir Edward immediately called for what Mr. Stanley had written respecting me, which accordingly was read, and which, as you may suppose, brought them upon me without pity. However I endured it pretty well.

“Not” (perhaps you will say) “much displeased.”

Be that as it may—I was glad to wave the conversation from the former subject, which, from what this eccentric genius had written to me, was really irksome.

When tea was over, Sir Edward, observing the evening was particularly fine, proposed a walk to Mr. Hutchinson’s, which was agreed to; Lady Stanley, therefore, and Emma went up to equip themselves. I staid below, having put on my bonnet before tea. Sir Edward went into the little study, therefore Sir Charles Conway and myself were left together.

“Miss Lawson, will you tell me—”

Sir Charles, have not you—We both, at the same instant, said to each other.

I stopped, and at my earnest desire Sir Charles continued.

“Think me not, madam, impertinent, when I request to know whether Mr. Stanley has said any thing particular to you respecting himself.”

He has, sir: and let me ask, returned I, if you have not a letter from him?

“I have, madam; and Lady Caroline Pemberton is not the only”—

—Lady mentioned in it, interrupted your friend.

“Not the only *woman*, Miss Lawson. As to the epithet of Lady, perhaps”—

Well, we will not dispute about epithets. Maria Birtles—

“Enough, madam: dare you exchange communication?”

Why—why yes. I hesitatingly replied. It cannot be a breach of confidence, because I am sure you will not *extend* your knowledge on the subject.

“Certainly not, madam. And I have the same belief in you. The peace of this admirable family is, beyond doubt, equally dear to us both.”

What Mr. Stanley had written respecting Mr. Evelyn, was no more than what Emma had read, I therefore gave to Sir Charles my letter, and received his; both of which were perused with astonishment, though nearly alike in their contents.

"Extremely strange!" and "Very unaccountable!"—were the exchanged exclamations at the moment of Emma's entrance into the room. She is always quick in dressing, but was now more expeditious than usual; or else we were so earnestly engaged we heeded not the lapse of time.

“What is strange? And what is unaccountable?”—asked she immediately, in an anxious tone of voice.

Sir Charles, with instant collection of mind, took hold of her hands, and smilingly said—“Why, my dear Emma, we were taking the liberty of criticising a little upon the perplexing volatility of our really unaccountable friend George; who dearly loves to create a wonder.”

“There is something more in this than I understand,” said she with penetrating looks, “why that heightened colour in your cheeks Charlotte? and why that perplexity in your countenance Sir Charles? Tell me I earnestly request, if you know any thing more of my brother than I do.”

We would have evaded her question, but she would not be evasively answered, and having seen the two letters as she entered, which she said she knew were both from George, she entreated to be told the contents of, at least, that to me.

Finding she could not be diverted from her purpose, we, at length, promised she should see both letters as we walked across the park; to facilitate, therefore our design, Sir Charles went forward with the truly reverend pair, while Emma and I lingered behind. Lady Stanley, as indeed we supposed she would, took it for granted I was reading George's letter to his sister; concluding it solely related to hints respecting Mr. Evelyn. Sir Charles did not discourage this idea.

As soon as we got into the Park. Emma expressed her impatience for the promised account

of her brother; but I told her she must have it by degrees, as I had to ask her a few previous questions.

"What can you mean Charlotte? But begin then what are they?"—hastily asked this affectionate-anxious sister.

I then said—you have frequently talked to me of your Maria Birtles, and always in high terms. Give me now, in a few words, your collected opinion of this young woman.

"Oh Charlotte, Charlotte!" said she with concern, "this question revives my fears. But thus I answer you—Maria Birtles is, in my estimation, one of the most extraordinary creatures I ever met with. In her person, she is beauty itself. In her understanding—bright and exalted; and her disposition is particularly sweet. In short, she is most lovely—accomplished—charming woman."

You must then said I, be extremely sorry at finding she had left Alverston.

"But upon one account," replied Miss Stanley, "I should have been grieved at it beyond expression."

Upon what account were you reconciled to it? asked I.

"*Upon my brother's,*" said she: adding—"I saw with concern his growing admiration of her shining qualities, and was alarmed for the consequence. His god-father claims, and is allowed an interest in him. The severity of my father's father was, as you have been often told, carried into cruelty. Mr. Slayton was more than a parent to both my father and mother for many years. They therefore look up to him with gratitude. He is a good man, but whimsical and positive, and would, I was convinced, oppose George's uniting himself to any woman circumstanced as was the one in question: for which reason I dreaded the disquiet his observation of her excellencies would probably make in the family. But for this—I could have held Maria Birtles to my heart with myself. She chained my affection to her in the first conversation, and every hour so increased my partiality that I was impatient to demand her as a FRIEND.

"I could expatiate largely on this subject, but am too anxious for your reply, to go on. What Miss Lawson have you to unfold?"

Prepare yourself for an affecting surprise, answered I, and read these two letters from your brother—putting into her hands, mine and Sir Charles Conway's.

To tell you how often Emma interrupted herself during her perusal of these strange epistles, would enlarge my packet beyond due bounds. She was both astonished and affected to an extreme degree, and lamented—first her brother's unpardonable proceeding; then the danger which she feared Maria Birtles was in; yet doubted not her standing firm against all seducement.

That you may be better able to judge of her emotions, I enclose a copy of the letters in question.

Miss Stanley's fervent affection for her brother—the purity of her own principles—her great regard for Maria, and the vexation this affair would probably introduce at Alverston—all conspired to distress her. When she read what George said about “his charmer's” never being Mrs. Stanley, yet that he would not marry any other, astonished her; as well it might; and it was with difficulty she composed herself enough to prevent any suspicion of her being so greatly affected. But at length she was a little calm, and determined to endeavour to wait the effect of Sir Charles's letter with patience. I asked her if she ever thought Maria Birtles saw Mr. Stanley's attention to her. She said she thought it could not escape her. Next I enquired whether she imagined she observed it with any degree of satisfaction.

Maria had, she told me, professed herself to be unprepossessed when she came into Derbyshire: “Is it probable then, Charlotte,” continued this fond sister, “that such a distinguishing woman could see the partiality of such a man as my brother is, with eyes of indifference? It is not in nature,” added she; “Maria Birtles *must* have been sensible of George's attention, and though she is, I believe, destitute of hereditary distinction—of fortune and connexion—incidental advantages, generally held in too high estimation by those who possess them—I would receive her as my sister with open arms; and I doubt not but my father and mother would accept her for a daughter, when they came to consider, with that equity which distinguishes them, all the attending circumstances. But Mr. Slayton would be ever averse. And then this Lady Caroline Pemberton—My dear Charlotte! I am greatly distressed. But let us walk forward. Our so long lingering may create some suspicion.

“To the Almighty I pray to preserve Maria in safety; my brother in honor, and our family in peace.”

I fervently joined her; we hastened after the party before us, and proceeded to Mrs. Hutchinson's, from whence we returned just in time for supper; very soon after which we separated; Sir Charles Conway, Emma and myself retiring to our pens, that our letters might be ready for the post, which goes from hence early to-morrow morning.

Miss Stanley now summons me away. She has finished her task, and will not permit my writing any longer. She says she wants to talk about her brother, though she does not know to what purpose.

I therefore, my dear Maria, abruptly bid you adieu.

C.L.

LETTER, XV.

SIR C. CONWAY, TO GEORGE STANLEY, ESQ.

Alverston, Saturday, April the 25th.

NOTwithstanding your prohibition, my dear George, I must write half a score lines upon the subject of your last very inexplicable epistle; but I will not *preach*, as you would term my remonstrating, I will only pray, beg, supplicate that you will develope the mystery in your last.

Your sister, by accident, has seen your letter to me, and likewise that which you wrote to Miss Lawson. This was not intended, but was, at last, unavoidable. Of consequence she is greatly anxious on your account; though she can hardly be more so than I am.

I forbear to make any comments on particular passages: I forbear—but with great difficulty—to request you will not involve yourself, and every one you love best, in perplexity and wretchedness irremediable, for the gratification of reprehensible inclinations.

You will not complain of my treating you with severity; but you will know, by the calmness I endeavour to assume, how sincerely I am concerned at what you have written.

Pity me, George; and write to me immediately.

CHARLES CONWAY.

LETTER, XVI.

MR. MAYNARD, TO MRS. MAYNARD.

Saturday, April 25th.

MY DEAREST HARRIET,

I Wrote to you on Wednesday from Kildwick. I now write from Penryth, but I am in so much haste to finish my business, that I cannot spare time for any particulars. Beyond my expectation, I have been successful, and mean to leave this place on Monday; reach Kildwick (where I hope to find some letters from you) on Wednesday, and on Friday, call at Oakley Hill, though not with much expectation of seeing its possessor. However, I intend to call; and for this reason amongst others—I wish you to direct a letter to be left for me there, as I shall then have more certainty of receiving it than if ordered to be left at an inn.

I have many things to tell you, but have no leisure; yet cannot omit giving you and Caroline the satisfaction of knowing that the good Kildwick Divine has consented to Miss Bromley's making you a visit at our house in Leicestershire, and as he has given up his school to a neighbouring clergyman, I have some hope that he will accompany her. The plan is to be finally settled at my return.

I wish I could translate this excellent man to a richer benefice; but if any of either the earl's or mine *should* become vacant, I quere if he could easily be persuaded to leave his present situation. The consideration most likely to prevail with him would be, that the living he at this time possesses would, upon his relinquishing it, be given the worthy man—Mr. Yates—to whom he has resigned his school; he having but a slender income to support a large family. As to the advantage his removal might be of to his Alethea—it would not weigh with him, as he does not wish her to be too much modernized; nor does he desire to increase her fortune beyond its present bounds: and he still persists in calling Lord Danvers' acknowledgment a preposterous one. However, I have made him promise never again to talk upon the subject.

Mrs. Pemberton enters into very gay life. Her reform is, I fear, at some distance.

But I must, my Harriet, bid you adieu, as I every minute expect the lawyers to make a final settlement.

Give my love to Caroline, and remember me duly to his lordship. Tell him I cannot give him any particulars till I shall be so happy as to see him.

Ever, my dearest girl, your faithful
AUGUSTUS MAYNARD.

LETTER, XVII.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MISS STANLEY.

Woodstock, twenty-fifth day of fourth month.

THY letter, my dearest Emma, enclosed in our Charlotte's, reached me yesterday. I will first thank thee for thy friendly invitation to Alverston, which I hope ere long to be able to accept, as my dear aunt Stanhope seemeth to be getting quite hearty, for which my bosom beateth with gratitude.

We undoubtedly ought always to hold ourselves in readiness to resign to their better inheritance our nearest connexions; yet oh Emma! what a pang would fix in the heart of thy Maria were her beloved aunt to be soon summoned to another world.

But I will not indulge this theme: thy letter calleth for a livelier reply.

And so our Charlotte is fairly caught, since she left this harmless region, in the traps of love! At this rate, who is safe? I did not, when she went from Woodstock, expect she would so soon have parted with her heart. But so it is: and, Emma, I must confess she hath every excuse that a woman can have for submitting to the bondage, as from account, and from appearance, Herbert Evelyn is well calculated to promote her happiness. My aunt is particularly pleased with him. She sayeth he cometh up to her highest expectation.

I need not say more to confirm to thee that his errand into Oxfordshire was to solicit the approbation of her mother and aunt to his wish of offering himself to their Charlotte. He did solicit it, and he likewise obtained it. The enclosed letter from Friend Lawson to her daughter, will let thee into particulars. To answer thy request of being first informed of the affair, I am permitted to send it under cover to thee.

Thou knowest not, Emma, how sincerely I have participated of the happiness thou hast experienced since thy return to Alverston. The character of Charles Conway prepossesseth every one in his favor, and giveth a probable hope that thy happiness will continue. The poor—the once wretched—instrument of the discovery which so much affected thee (Polly Fenton) is now in a comfortable situation. Friend Eleanor Lawson, with a charity which doth honour to her name, hath taken her to wait upon her in the room of her Peggy, who is married to William Rush; the servant that lived with Doctor Griffith, when thou wert last at Woodstock, and whom the Doctor hath made his clerk upon the death of poor old Roger.

Polly sayeth she is now as happy as she can ever expect to be in this world. Her spirits, at times, are very low; more, I hope, the effect of remorse for what she hath done, than of regret for the gay life she hath quitted.

We cannot, thou knowest, my dear Emma, form infallible opinions of the human heart; but as far as we may judge from appearances, Polly Fenton is a real proselyte to virtue. She is not *officious* to talk of the past, nor doth she decline it, when, for good reasons, she is called to it by

those whom she hath cause to think her real friends. In her dress she is greatly soberized, without being reminded of the necessity of any alteration. Her understanding is a very good one, and her disposition naturally agreeable; therefore I have strong hope she may some time hence be as much an example, as she has hitherto been a warning, to her sex.

My aunt desireth her love to thee; and she likewise requesteth thine excellent mother to accept her respects and her thanks for the invitation her Maria hath received to visit Alverston, which she hath given her liberty to accept in a few weeks.

The reason of my not being immediately able to set out for Derbyshire, where so large a piece of my heart is confined, is on account of a promise my aunt gave the Harleys, that she and I should spend some days with them at Stanton, after their return from Leicestershire, (where they have been upon a visit to Henry Colville) if nothing unexpected should prevent us; upon which Sally Harley engaged an old acquaintance of mine—Eliza Brewster—to give me, at her house, a meeting.

And now, my dear Emma, farewell. I will not at this time write to Charlotte, as her mother hath sent her such a packet: but tell her I congratulate her very sincerely; though a little concerned at the probability of her soon leaving Woodstock; for I apprehend Herbert Evelyn will not delay to secure his jewel.

Thine, my dear friend, in sincerity,
MARIA LEWIS.

LETTER, XVIII.

MRS. LAWSON, TO MISS LAWSON.

Woodstock, Saturday, April 25th.

AS my dear Charlotte is already in expectation of the subject upon which I am going to write, I will instantly begin with it, by telling her Mr. Evelyn arrived here yesterday morning, and did not leave us till this day after dinner; when he went to Oxford.

Notwithstanding I am exceedingly obliged to Lady Stanley, as, with my affectionate compliments, I desire you will tell her, for the very agreeable letter of intelligence she sent me by him—it was I think almost unnecessary, as his appearance so instantly confirmed to both your aunt and myself, the ideas we had imbibed of him from your occasional descriptions: I mean of his mind, for of his person, prepossessing as it is, I remember you scarce ever made any mention; a circumstance I reflect upon with much pleasure.

That Mr. Evelyn has our full approbation, it would, after what I have said, be superfluous to add.

With respect to rank and fortune indeed—you might probably do what is called better; but in our estimation not so well. Shall I at this time observe upon the particulars which in general constitute happy marriages? or point out with what sentiments a young woman ought to enter into conjugal life? No; I need not: my Charlotte has not now this lesson to learn. She has often heard our opinion upon these important subjects.

Mr. Evelyn has nothing more in his possession at present than the Alverston living, which, however, is an exceeding good one; but this, as you probably know, he means to resign upon the death of the Hawthorn-Grove Rector; Sir Charles Conway having already secured to him the next presentation to that benefice, which is, it seems, nearly the same in value, but which he would prefer, as he thinks it would be more pleasant to *you* to live near Lady Conway elect.

“Then you will not,” said my sister Eleanor to him, smiling, “be a monopolist?”

“Not upon any account, madam,” said he, “where the benefices are so large; and I hope my determination upon that point meets your approbation.”

Having perfectly satisfied him on this head—he added that he could not think it would be consistent with the principles of Sir Edward Stanley to have the living of Alverston united with that of Hawthorn Grove, though he had forbore from sentiments he believed, of delicacy, to speak to him upon that head; but he—Mr. Evelyn—had requested Sir Charles Conway to mention the particulars to Sir Edward in his absence, and to ask him to excuse his intention of relinquishing Alverston, if it should be that he survived the Hawthorn-Grove Rector.

Need I tell you how much pleased your aunt and I were with this mode of conduct!

We now proceeded, taking it for granted you were not *averse* to this good young man, [Were we right, Charlotte?] to the article of fortune; upon which we very soon came to an agreement.

Mr. Evelyn's father has an estate of fourteen hundred a year; two only of which were settled upon his lady; therefore over the other twelve he has absolute power, which it is to be feared he will not use much to the interest of this his only child by his first wife, having lately married a young woman much beneath him in every respect.

When we informed our visitant of the considerable sum you were already possessed of, and what we farther intended should be yours, he was evidently surprised and uneasy; having, I am persuaded, no idea of your being mistress of half that sum, as indeed he afterwards affirmed; adding, that had he been rightly informed on that particular, he should have been deterred from his present pursuit from many considerations; a principal one—lest the professions of his affection should have been suspected to be interested.

Upon this point we had some conversation not unpleasing to two *mothers*—for surely your aunt well deserves the title—anxious for the happiness of a beloved child deserving their tenderest attention.

I will not now, Charlotte, enlarge upon this subject.

Yesterday I had a letter from Lady Blurton, and a strange one it is, telling me your sister has received a particular address from *the Honorable* Benjamin Tupps, brother to her late lord, which she seems to think an honor not to be refused, though the gentleman, more than twice her age, has scarce an independency, and is much too high to think of encreasing his fortune by any commercial method. It would doubtless be very convenient to him to marry Rachel, but it is a matter from which (though at *her own* importunity we might be induced to give our consent) we must ever, I fear, withhold our approbation. I have written to her ladyship, and likewise to your sister, my opinion with more unreserve than may be approved; but on such an occasion as this, what is falsely termed politeness, ought to give way to higher considerations.

I cannot help being somewhat surprised that a young woman of Rachel Lawson's really good understanding should attend to such an address as that which employed Lady Blurton's pen. But I will endeavour to dismiss from my thoughts this subject till I hear from your sister; as I cannot but think what I have said upon it will be effectual.

I must not forget to tell you that Mrs. Cartright was here last Monday and desired she might be remembered to you with particularity.

Mr. Epsom is returned to Mowbray. His sister is gone to Exeter.

Mrs. Kemble means to continue at Summerfield, having taken under her tutorage Miss Morton and Miss Lucy Wyatt. She mentioned, some time since, to two or three of her friends, her having a wish to take a couple of young girls, of good families, from the age of ten to fourteen, to teach reading; writing; arithmetic; grammar; geography, and music; and to instruct them in the

manners of polite life. Her wish was immediately answered; for as soon as Lady Morton and Mrs. Wyatt heard her sentiments, they requested her to take a daughter from each of them, which she did, and manages them in the cleverest manner possible. She instructs them to use the pen with the greatest facility. Their writing tasks are in the form of letters to herself and to each other; their subjects various; but frequently on grammar, geography and astronomy. She often makes them exercise themselves in dancing but thinks they can be better taught this accomplishment at a school where there are many pupils, and as there is a tolerable good one in the neighbourhood, she attends it with them.

I never saw a mode of instruction I so greatly approve. If the children continue under her care for any length of time, they will, I think, be highly polished. She does not treat them like scholars, but as daughters of her own; and the affection they have for her is very observable.

I wish more people in Mrs. Kemble's situation and with her abilities, would employ themselves to the same exemplary purpose. It would be a universal benefit to the female sex. Had I a girl to educate and chose not to undertake the charge, I should think myself happy in finding a Mrs. Kemble to entrust her with.

Miss Lewis is to give you an account of Polly Fenton. I will not, therefore, say any more about her than that we have great hopes of her future well-doing.

You will, my Charlotte, remember us in the highest terms of affection and respect to all at Alverston; and will believe me to be, with the tenderest sentiments,

your fondly anxious mother,
ELIZABETH LAWSON.

Your aunt insists upon your acceptance of the enclosed bank-note, and bids me to charge you not to be too good an œconomist.

LETTER, XIX.

MR. STANLEY, TO SIR CHARLES CONWAY.

London, Monday, April 27th.

YOUR letter, my dear Charles, is now received. I was just going to write to my sister; but a reply to yours, will answer all my purposes.

Set your heart at rest. I mean to be a good boy. Let this suffice. It is not now in my power to unriddle my last, were I inclined; which I more than half am, on account of the evident anxiety of your friendly scrip. But have patience till Thursday. On that day I hope to see you. Tell this to my father; my mother, and the girls: and tell them, likewise, that I am to be honored by the company of the Earl of Danvers; Lady Caroline Pemberton; Mrs. Maynard, and my ungovernable godfather. Our plan is to reach the Park by dinner; sleep there on Thursday evening, and the next day trundle to Oakley-Hill; our party I hope enlarged by the happy one now at Alverston; which I conclude you conspire to compose.

Need I assure you, of the sincerity of my meaning in the above? No: I will not. If you hesitate in believing me—go and be hanged.

Evelyn is just arrived. He intended setting out for Derbyshire on Wednesday, but I have, partly by threats, partly by entreaty, prevailed upon him to stay till Thursday and accompany us down. He therefore sends a letter to *his* witch by the messenger I dispatch with this, who is to take answers, and with them meet us at Leicester on Wednesday evening. Herbert and I are both upon tip-toe; but I think I am the veriest fool of the two. I believe I have never shut my mouth since I saw you last; being always either laughing or singing; except I now and then draw my lips to a whistle.

But do not think I shall write any longer. I shall not indeed.

I have a prodigious regard for you Conway, but—but I am mad—that is all.

Fare you well.

GEORGE STANLEY.

LETTER, XX.

MRS. MAYNARD, TO AUGUSTUS MAYNARD, ESQ.

Monday, April the 27th.

THE information, my dear Augustus which your letter has this instant afforded, respecting your return, fixes our determination to leave London early on Wednesday; to proceed that day to Leicester, where we mean to sleep; to continue next morning our route to Alverston Park, and on the Friday, post to Oakley-Hill to meet him who presides over my every wish. As it is probable—or at least possible—that you may be at the place of assignation before we can reach it, I send this letter to

detain you till our arrival, as it would be a horrid baulk should you escape us. I shall moreover send James on Thursday to your Mansfield Inn; lest by any means, this should be miscarried.

That you have received my packet of Wednesday's date, I take for granted. If not, you will wonder what I am writing about; therefore in a few words let me lead you to expect at Oakley-Hill Lord Danvers; Lady Caroline; Sir Edward, Lady, Mr. and Miss Stanley; Miss Lawson; Mr. Evelyn; Sir Charles Conway and your Harriet; escorted by the Squire of the mansion, who engages for our being accompanied by the party at Alverston. I need not to this information, add that of the present state of our affairs. These arrangements will let you into the whole at once. However as I have a bit of spare time, and as you may want some amusement before we reach you, I will allow my pen to wander half an hour.

Ever since my last, we have been wonderous happy. Caroline—our beloved Caroline is now all herself; and I verily think grows more and more handsome every day. Without any dispute she is *one* of the finest, if not *the* finest creature in the kingdom; and of this Mr. Stanley seems perfectly persuaded, for never did I see a man more completely fascinated.

I made a most abominable mistake the other day which our cousin has hardly yet forgiven.

After an agreeable evening spent at the earl's, where the conversation (began by his lordship) turned upon Lady Caroline's leaving Berkley Square; her going to Dover; disastrous sail, &c, it was earnestly requested by Mr. Stanley that he might see the account she herself gave of it in her letters to me; it having been said that she had written of it minutely. With her permission, Mr. Stanley having secured the earls vote in his favor, I promised to look it out down to the period of her going to Alverston, and put it into his hands. He petitioned for the remainder of the letters soon but this grant was peremptorily denied.

Some after this was settled, we parted for the night: the gentlemen being next day to dine with us (for our party has been almost inseparable ever since last Tuesday:) however the young one arrived to breakfast, being impatient for the promised letters, which Caroline and I the night before had parcelled out; dividing one of them, so that the detail he was to receive closed just before the introduction of himself; which, you may remember, you smiled at, as it was ushered in by a supposed question of yours, relative to Sir Edward's having a son as well as the daughter she had been describing; and was followed by Caroline's confession of partiality, and indeed with every circumstance down to her leaving Alverston in a pet on receiving the intelligence of Mr. Stanley's being gone in pursuit of Lady Lucinda Harrington.

These last I wrapped up by themselves and as I thought, put them into a drawer in my escritoir. However I was mistaken, for I secured the others, and gave to Mr. Stanley at breakfast, those which were prohibited. He very gratefully received and put them into his pocket; and Caroline and I being under an engagement, to Miss Delwin, took the opportunity of our absence to peruse them.

He says he did not at first comprehend the mistake; acknowledges that when it appeared he ought not to have read on, and believes, had we been at home, he should have set the matter right immediately; but as that was not the case, and being forcibly attacked by an ardent desire to know

his Caroline's continued sentiments of him, the monitions of conscience were unheeded, and indeed till he had finished, so enchanted was he by what he read, that he did not perfectly consider the reprehensibility of his perseverance.

I felt the force of his excuse, and though I did not exculpate him, made great allowances for what he had done; but did not chuse to tell him so.

As soon as we returned from Miss Delwin's, Caroline went up to her dressing-room, I to seek Mr. Stanley, when the foregoing explanation took place, upon which I gave him a very hearty scold, yet could not help smiling at the uncommon expressions of happiness which appeared in his countenance, while he was professing his concern for having read what he ought to have shut his eyes against. Encouraged, I suppose, by my smile, he took hold of both my hands, and looking earnestly in my face, asked me what I really thought I should have done under the same circumstances.

Suppressed, I hope, my inclination, replied I, or afterwards have been very severe upon myself for my faulty indulgence.

He owned he had been blameable, yet acknowledged he could hardly repent; such extreme happiness had he reaped from the perusal of the forbidden lines; but he begged with such earnestness that Lady Caroline might not be apprized of the mistake, lest she should be pained, however unnecessarily, at the idea of his having seen her sentiments, that I almost forgave what he had done on account of the delicacy of this request; and we agreed to keep the secret to ourselves; therefore I stepped up-stairs for the other packet, that he might peruse what Caroline expected he had seen, before he met with her.

However after I left him, I, upon consideration, concluded it would be best for her to know what had happened, that she might conduct herself accordingly; fearing, if it were hidden from her, her naturally ingenuous mind might be liable to the charge of affectation. I therefore acquainted her with the circumstance in full, which, as I apprehended, pained her beyond expressing; but I summoned a whole string of arguments, which I enforced with the recollection that he would not know she was privy to the event; and then looking over with her the letters he had perused, and observing upon the delicacy of her expressions through the whole, she was, at length, somewhat reconciled to what had happened, though it left a kind of a timid, apprehensive air upon her countenance.

I was not quite satisfied with myself for coinciding with Mr. Stanley, that Caroline ought not to know this business, yet as soon as I parted from him went and informed her of it. However, I seriously acted to the best of my judgment; and, perhaps, it is better it should be thus than otherwise.

When Mr. Stanley met Caroline, I was charmed with the delicacy of his manner; and she, I know, observed it to his advantage. He approached her with rather more distance than ordinary; but I saw restrained rapture dancing in his eyes. I almost think his behaviour must have half reconciled our fair cousin to the mistake of the morning. In a very pathetic manner he touched upon the contents of the letters she had allowed him to see. "But how," said he, "must I manage to be sorry that the events happened which carried you to Alverston?"

The lovely girl blushed, and most gracefully looked down. Just before dinner they had half an hour's conversation, which Lady Caroline owned to me to be a very agreeable one. It began with the pleasure all at Alverston would receive from seeing Maria Birtles in Lord Danvers' daughter.

Mr. Slayton has been so industrious, that whenever the parties are agreed to conclude their comedy, the writings can be finished at a short warning. Caroline is a little vexed at what she calls this unnecessary haste, but the old Squire will not be impeded in his motions.

About an hour since, Mr. Stanley's servant brought a little parcel directed to my cousin, upon opening which, we found a neat shagreen case containing a gold medallion. Upon one side was an elegant pearl basket, filled with small flowers, which were entirely composed of various coloured jewels. I never saw any thing of the kind more beautiful. On the back side, a cypher of G S was neatly engraved. We admired it some minutes without perceiving its greatest beauty, when touching a spring, the head of which was a table-diamond, the medallion opened, and our eyes were presented with that identical miniature of Mr. Stanley, which Lady Caroline dropped at the ball at Hazle-wood Lodge. It was set in plain gold without ornament, and underneath it were written the following lines:

“Accept, fair Excellence, this little piece,
“More valued than the brightest tints of Greece.
“By thee portrayed, my face receives a glow
“Superior to what GAINSB'ROUGH bestow.
“Charmed with my form—thus honored by thy art—
Narcissus like—I gaze and loose my heart.”

I must own this little piece of gallantry pleased me mightily. Lord Danvers was with us when the present arrived, and insisted upon it that Lady Caroline should sit for a picture of the same size; which he would order to be jewelled for Mr. Stanley.

There is not, I think, in the kingdom a more magnificently-minded man than this uncle of yours, who now shows himself in his own colours; being, as he affirms, more happy than he ever was before.

Apropos—Lord Crumpford had a most complete dressing the other day at the London Tavern, in the presence of upwards of twenty gentlemen of high rank.

By some means or other, the whole story respecting Lady Caroline and poor Thomas William Pemberton was inserted in the St. James's Chronicle, with every circumstance, and indeed every aggravation, that could be given. It was said this precious ornament to the English nobility now refuses to pay for the board of the poor lad whom he trimmed out as the heir of the earldom; yet a conjecture is offered that he is actually married in private to his daughter. I could almost wish this latter circumstance were true; for the girl is said to inherit very exactly her father's disposition, which an education under his own eye has ripened to maturity. An intimation is given, that at any rate he is his son; but whether naturally or legally, is the question. A third insinuation is his own marriage with Mrs. Pemberton, in order to secure her secrecy; but that he knows how to invalidate engagements of this kind, and to silence the complainant.

I cannot imagine who it is that can have done all this: for it must be a person intimately acquainted with the truth, though it is given in this suppositious manner. Be it who it will, it has pulled the town about, him, as he cannot deny the great circumstances. It seems he had not read this paper when he went to the meeting, else he certainly would not have ventured out. I am told there was quite an uproar upon his appearance. None of the gentlemen would stay in his company. He was therefore desired to quit the room, but refused; endeavouring to brave it out, till at length our old friend the admiral, no longer master of his temper said some very severe things which produced from Lord Crumpford the most abusive language, upon which the admiral went up to him; took him by the nose, by which he led him to the door, and then kicked him out of the room; all which this infamous poltroon—you know he always bore the character of a coward—took very patiently, and sneaked off to a hackney coach, into which he jumped with the utmost expedition, and was driven away (doubtless according to his own desire) with great velocity.

So much for this rascally lord, whom I hope I shall never more see near me. I feel myself greatly gratified by this disgrace of his; with the account of which I will conclude my letter; subscribing to the unnecessary assertion of my being ever yours, the name of

HARRIET MAYNARD.

LETTER, XXI.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, April 30th.

MARIA, we are all here in the utmost astonishment. I can hardly arrange my ideas sufficiently to give you any tolerable account of the events this day has produced. Such a tale! where to begin I know not. But I will try to let you into the light of things if I can; first preparing you to expect that this will be a very incoherent letter; pieced, probably, in twenty places; for I cannot this day spare you more than a quarter of an hour together, upon any account.

Yesterday—for I must go back—Yesterday—no, Tuesday I mean, the post-man brought your very agreeable packet; which I should be pleased to expatiate upon, had I leisure. Tell my dear, dear mother—tell my aunt, that I am greatly obliged by the contents of the letter I received. O Maria! I dare not say *how much* I am obliged, because—because—I *cannot*. Every line was pleasing to me. I *will* confess it, and I would have made the confession sooner, but that I was stung upon my right hand last Sunday by a poor little bee which, unheedingly, I crushed upon the green-house window. For two or three days it was swelled and very painful. I could scarce move my fingers; and *this* prevented my immediately writing to Woodstock my grateful acknowledgements.

And now for the tale which caused, at the beginning of this sheet, my expressions of surprise.

The weather being yesterday rather cloudy, though not wet, we determined to spend the day

within-doors, and accordingly sat down after breakfast in the library, but I being unable to do any work, was deputed to read to Lady Stanley and Emma. We had not sat long before we saw Sir Charles Conway's carriage driven up the great avenue, and he soon entered the room with rather a serious air, which he presently accounted for by reading a letter he had received from Mr. Stanley (in reply to his remonstrating one) by a special messenger whom he brought with him to Alverston; the man having orders to return to Leicester that evening with an answer.

He likewise brought one for me Maria, which I will first tell you the purport of, that the mention of it may not, afterwards interfere with my story.

It was, my dear, from Mr. Evelyn; the substance of it his visit—his successful visit to Woodstock. He then in a most delicate and tender manner—But I will enclose it for the perusal of your happy circle, for two reasons. First because I am in haste to write on; and lastly and chiefly, because I cannot do it full justice by dissection. I have in compliance (as you will see) with his earnest request given it an answer, the copy of which I will enclose likewise, and hope it will not be disapproved. My endeavour was to be as candid as delicacy would allow; yet I could not Maria be quite, *quite* unreserved; nor could I help expressing a *little* surprise at the confessed purport of his journey into Oxfordshire.

And so much for this subject at present.

Mr. Stanley in his letter to Sir Charles Conway, makes some apology for having given him any concern; bids him be easy till Thursday, when he hopes to see him at Alverston, and tells him he shall be accompanied by the earl of Danvers; Lady Caroline Pemberton; Mrs. Maynard; Mr. Slayton, and Mr. Evelyn, who intended to have been down as yesterday, but whom he had persuaded to stay and attend the party. He then intimates that they will expect our going with them, the next day, to Oakley Hill.

It is in vain Maria to attempt describing the wonder we were all in at this unexpected, unrequested visit. It seemed mighty odd that such a lady as Lady Caroline Pemberton, should condescend, under such circumstances, to be the first to seek the acquaintance; and that she should be countenanced in it by relations of such consequence. We could not but look upon it as somewhat forward. However Emma, Sir Charles and I suppressed, in some measure, our sentiments till we were by ourselves, and then we conjectured till we were tired, without coming to any conclusion; but we dispatched the messenger with the letters, and then made what little preparations were necessary to receive, and likewise to accompany them to Oakley-Hill. During the remainder of the day, this ensuing visit engrossed our conversation. We sometimes determined to drop the subject, but it again and again insensibly arose till our party separated for the night, and then it was revived between Emma and me.

This morning, (not knowing how early in the day they might be with us, as they intended to sleep, which they did, last night at Leicester) Emma and I arose rather sooner than usual, and, having dressed ourselves, went down to breakfast, when it was proposed by Sir Charles and agreed to by all, that he and I (we having both been introduced to the two ladies, and Sir Charles to the earl) should go down into the garden upon the first sight of the carriages that we might receive and accompany the visitors into the drawing-room. Accordingly about one o'clock (previous orders having been

given for that purpose) a servant announcing the distant approach of equipages, which it was conjectured could be none but those expected, down into the garden, attended by the baronet, I went, where having walked a few minutes a most elegant landau, followed by a very handsome coach and a chaise, approached the outward front gates, and were in an instant at the door of the saloon. Sir Charles and I were already upon the steps when Mr. Stanley sprang from the first carriage and handed out the ladies, whom, with his usual grace, and with even more than usual vivacity sparkling in his countenance, he introduced to me and the baronet; or strictly speaking, I believe he presented *us* to *them*. Mr. Evelyn followed the ladies out of the landau. His address to me was graceful and dignified. I felt myself at once relieved from the awkwardness I had apprehended. Sir Charles Conway's reception of him was more than brotherly.

While these salutations were passing the landau made way for the coach; out of which came Lord Danvers and Mr. Slayton, and having made our mutual compliments, the earl led Mrs. Maynard; Mr. Slayton conducted Lady Caroline, and Mr. Stanley handed me—Sir Charles and Mr. Evelyn following—into the drawing-room.

And now Maria endeavour to form to yourself the surprise we all experienced (after the earl and Mrs. Maynard had been introduced by Mr. Stanley, who had quitted me upon our entrance into the room) when upon Mr. Slayton's leading up the lovely, blushing, sparkling Lady Caroline Pemberton, Lady Stanley, in advancing to receive her, started and stopped; then hastening to her, and throwing her arms around her, exclaimed—"My dear, lovely girl!—my often regretted Maria! But who is it"—continued she, as if recollecting all circumstances, and partly withdrawing from Lady Caroline's returning embrace, as she seemed going to speak—"that I have now had the pleasure to salute?"

"Give *me* leave, my dear madam," said Mr. Stanley stepping between them and taking the lovely creature's hand, while we stood gazing in wonder—"to have the supreme felicity of restoring to you your lost Maria Birtles in the person of Lady Caroline Pemberton, who has been generously impatient to see and to thank you for the protection she found at Alverston, though by taking refuge here, she laid upon *us* the highest of all obligations."

Can you guess, my dear girl, the astonishment which all we, who were not in the secret, were seized with on hearing that the Maria Birtles of whom we had so often talked as a servant, was no less a person than Lady Caroline Pemberton! Our eyes were enlarged by surprise, and we all looked upon each other as if we knew not what to say.

Lady Stanley, ever present to herself, was immediately collected, and having re-embraced Lady Caroline, led her to Sir Edward, saying to Mr. Stanley—"Let *me*, my dear son, have the pleasure of presenting this admirable lady to your father, who always greatly—*more* greatly than at the time I dare tell you, George—observed and admired *Maria Birtles*."

Lady Stanley smiled as she spoke, and her smile conveyed the intelligence of her having seen Mr. Stanley's partiality for the beautiful refugee, who blushed at the intimation, and looked sweetly confused, while Sir Edward, with the vivacity and politeness so natural to him, confirmed his lady's sentiments.

Emma now claimed Lady Caroline's more immediate attention; and greatly interesting to the by-standers was the evident happiness they mutually experienced; expressed in the warmest language of genuine friendship.

I cannot, Maria, tell you half the polite and agreeable things which were said from one to another upon this occasion. It was long before any thing arose which could be called conversation. Some very pleasing salutations passed between the earl; Sir Edward and Lady Stanley, who were joined by Mr. Slayton. The old Squire seemed all joy, and called for the congratulations of every one present upon his having found a *god-daughter*, as he says he shall always call Mr. Stanley's wife, to the great confusion of Lady Caroline, who was not prepared for such an early explanation as now in some measure necessarily took place.

"Let me tell you, cousin," says the old gentleman to Lady Stanley, "I did not much like your fine chambermaid. Faith! I thought her too—too—you understand me—to be thrown into the boy's view. I thought the bait was much too tempting, faith! Or else it was like showing a lamb to a lion."

To this delicate speech of Mr. Slayton's, Mr. Stanley bowed, and ironically thanked him, and to relieve Lady Caroline, respectfully led her up to Sir Charles Conway, saying—"Permit me, madam, once more to present to you my friend from early years, for whom you already know my sentiments. As for you, my dear Conway—the happiness I see you experience on the present occasion, adds to that which I before enjoyed. Forgive me that I suffered you to remain till now in perplexity. Yet, Charles, you deserved it for your former saucy epithets"—alluding it seems to Sir Charles' having taunted Mr. Stanley about "*his sister's waiting-maid*."

"It was well for the strength of my arguments"—with a polite and pleasing air returned the baronet—"that I knew not your inducements; as however much I might have wished you to have guarded your heart, consciousness would have forbid my expecting you to remain insensible: indeed the impossibility of a defence would have kept me silent."

The company now, for a few minutes, divided into groups. The four elders made one: Mrs. Maynard; her lovely cousin; the brother and the sister, with Sir Charles Conway, constituted another; and Mr. Evelyn drew *me* to one of the bow-windows, where a short conversation ensued, which I will give you, Maria, in some other opportunity. Its effect was to set me perfectly at ease, and to give, I believe, some relief to himself.

And now for a few words to account for Lady Caroline's having sought protection at Alverston Park. Her being driven from Berkley Square, we were apprized of by Major Carrington; and likewise that she had entered on board a ship for some part of the coast of France: but the Major knew not that she was thrown, by a dreadful storm, upon the Hampshire shore, where she was, at length, safely landed. After this event she went to London, to very private lodgings; and in a short time, by means of the late Mrs. Douglas of Grosvenor Square, she procured a recommendation to Miss Stanley.

Thus Maria have I ended my tale, which I am sure has been very interesting to my dear friends at Woodstock, about whom Lady Caroline several times in the course of the day enquired with affectionate expressions of respect. To my Maria she requested to be mentioned with the

kindest remembrance. The earl, likewise desired his compliments to every one of those I so often think of in Oxfordshire.

It is now past midnight. I have written till my fingers ache; therefore will forbear to give any farther account of one of the most pleasant days in which I ever existed. Every mortal present seemed happy beyond description. Mrs. Maynard, indeed, who is extremely lively, affected to be disconsolate because, to use her own expression, she was *swain-less*; but she declared she would make an offer to Mr. Slayton as soon as ever he returned from a walk he was then, according to his constant custom, taking after dinner; and she was as good as her word; for upon his coming in, she went up to him, made a very demure courtesy, and offered herself to his acceptance; which he—for they perfectly understand each other—accepted; and they agreed to be beau and belle till they should see Mr. Maynard to-morrow at Oakley Hill; that expectation, you are to understand, being the primary occasion of this jaunt; but Lady Caroline's gratitude led her to wish to take Alverston in the way.

How much to the honor of this charming woman is the motive, when investigated, of this almost censured visit! It is strange that mortals, from their so daily experiencing a lack of foresight, do not learn to suspend their judgement till they can have all facts in their view!

Lady Caroline Pemberton sacrificed to gratitude the false delicacy of avoiding Alverston. She was, I dare say, above all concern respecting any misconstruction of her visit; which, indeed, could *not* be misconstrued by any one acquainted with the circumstances. But if I indulge myself upon any thing particularly relative to the merits of this ornament to our sex, I shall write till daylight. It is now considerably past the dismal hour of twelve, and I find myself inclined to drowsiness. For this night, therefore, Maria, I will finish, but as I know you will be impatient to hear of our goings-on, will resume my employment as soon as opportunity offers.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XXII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Friday night, Oakley Hill, May 1st.

We have passed another day, my dear friend, in uninterrupted happiness; and I again feel from experience the truth of that observation, which tells us of the seeming length of *very* happy hours. Almost every *minute* of the day past has, I think, impressed itself distinctly on my ideas. No wonder, therefore, that the day itself seems to have been protracted.

We were none of us stirring this morning till rather late. The agreeable fatigues of *yesterday* made us, I suppose, all sleep found. Mr. Slayton was the first who was seen; and he, being impatient for his breakfast, summoned three or four of the servants who were musical, at the head of which was the butler (who I believe taught some of the rest) and serenaded us from the chains of Somnus. A French horn was amongst the instruments which awakened us; and we all, it seems, instantly left our beds to develope the cause of the harmony, and in a short time were assembled in the library.

Every countenance I saw appeared to beam satisfaction; and a general vivacious conversation ensued; which, however, was soon interrupted by the arrival of a letter to Sir Charles Conway, who seemed to be affected by what he read. He sat a few moments silent, and then informed us that the letter he had received, contained an account of the death of the good old Rector of Hawthorn Grove. This gentleman, upwards of eighty; perfectly sound in his intellects and senses, was last night found sitting in an easy chair in his closet, with the last twenty lines of Doctor Young's third night in his hands; which, as the ink was scarce dry, and the transcript not verbatim, it was presumed he had just been writing from memory.

When his servant went to enquire the cause of his longer stay than usual, he saw him sitting as if asleep; but upon standing to observe a few minutes, and gently endeavouring to move him, he found him breathless. The family, consisting entirely of antient domestics, was presently alarmed, and Doctor Spalding sent for, who soon pronounced him to be flown to a brighter region. The Doctor then ordered him to be laid upon a bed, by the side of which (as the man who carried the letter informed us) he sat down near an hour in perfect silence; then arose and wrote to Sir Charles Conway.

I make no comments upon this event, Maria; nor suffer myself to look forward to its consequences; only adding to what I have said, that Sir Edward; Sir Charles, and Mr. Evelyn, had a conference in the library-closet just before we left Alverston.

Our breakfasting lasted till almost noon, when Mr. Slayton reminded us that it was high time for us to prepare for our journey to Oakley Hill, as the carriages would be in readiness in half an hour. We therefore attended to his intimation; separated to dress, and appeared pretty near the time prescribed. The cavalcade was arranged by Mrs. Maynard, who is too vivacious to be unemployed; and whose vivacity was increased by the expectation of seeing Mr. Maynard at the end of the journey; they being, it seems, an extremely happy couple. The carriages were a coach; a landau, and a post-chaise. In the first were placed Sir Edward; Lady Stanley; Emma, and Lady Caroline Pemberton. In the second, Lord Danvers; Mrs. Maynard; Mr. Slayton, and your Charlotte. Sir Charles Conway; Mr. Stanley, and Mr. Evelyn, rode on horseback, and the post-chaise conveyed the female attendants.

The conversation during the journey was lively and interesting. Lord Danvers, as you have observed, is a truly fine gentleman. I am told he is the most altered man in the world since this turn of his affairs; that gaming, which he has now formally renounced, had so entirely engrossed his ideas, and, for a time, corrupted his heart, that his daughter, of whom he always used to be exceedingly fond, was entirely disregarded by him till Lord Crumpford's wicked proposals drew his attention upon her to destroy her happiness. His lordship now speaks of this transaction with officiousness, as if he wished to evince his sense of his folly [to give it a soft name] and consequent repentance.

The letters which Lady Caroline wrote of the whole affair, were mentioned, and I was promised a sight of them; Mrs. Maynard having brought them with her at Mr. Stanley's earnest request. I doubt not, Maria, but I shall get leave to transmit them to Woodstock; if not, I will employ my memory in your service, and give you as much of them as that will retain.

When we reached Oakley Hill, Mrs. Maynard's countenance spoke the anxiety she was under to know if Mr. Maynard was arrived; and when she saw him, which was immediately upon the stopping of the carriage, her eyes sparkled with joy. This happy pair, as I have before observed, are a proper example for all in the conjugal life.

As soon as we alighted, we were ushered into a very neat drawing-room, where, after mutual compliments had been given and returned, chocolate was ordered; but Mr. Maynard told Mr. Slayton he had some other guests to introduce, and then informed us that as soon as he had received a letter from Mrs. Maynard, which was directed to him at Kildwick, and which communicated the design of the party to meet him at Oakley Hill, he had spared no pains to induce Mr. and Miss Broomley to accompany him, that he might receive the thanks of the family he had so unreturnably obliged.

“Not to receive *their* thanks for a bare performance of duty,” replied the good man, “but (if we *do* go) to return our own:—or rather to express our disapprobation of the unreasonable donation you obliged us to receive, as a recompence for an employment annexed to the duties of my office.”

After a contest which Mr. Maynard said he was determined not easily to give up, Mr. Broomley dispatched a messenger to a young gentleman in the neighbourhood, who was waiting for a curacy in that part of the country, to request his officiating at Kildwick till his return; which request was thankfully complied with; and as Miss Broomley asked but a few hours to get herself in readiness, they agreed to leave Kildwick the next morning; which they accordingly did, and arriving at Oakley Hill about three hours before we reached it, were in another room waiting to be introduced.

At hearing this, Lord Danvers instantly arose, and taking Lady Caroline by the hand, they were conducted by Mr. Slayton, attended by Mr. Maynard, to this worthy, reverend man and Miss Broomley, with whom they staid near a quarter of an hour, and then led to the company in the drawing-room, where they were received with the most respectful politeness. Indeed their appearance alone would have ensured them this reception; for never did I behold two figures more interesting. Mr. Broomley's face, air and manner are all expressive of goodness and greatness of heart. Love and reverence must seize the mind of every one to whom he is introduced; and his conversation, which is at once animated and solid, confirms the prepossession. As to Miss Broomley—were I not writing to Maria Lewis, I would say that these two young ladies bear a very near resemblance to each other. Every one who knows both, joined in the observation. Lady Caroline Pemberton was the first who mentioned it, and Mr. Evelyn joined in it with such a warmth!—But I will not tell you what he said, Maria; nor what I have often heard him say since his return from Oxfordshire. For two reasons I will not. First, because—But now I think of it, I will not even tell you my reasons. Chide if you can, my dear; but I rather doubt your power in that particular.

The charming little Alethea, whose complexion no lily can out-vie, was dressed in a fine thin muslin round-gown, welted up to the top, and worn over a pale straw-coloured silk. Her cap was nearly as simple as your own, and her hat almost as plain. She is extremely innocent and lively; not the least embarrassed by appearing in such a large circle: yet sweetly delicate and timid.

I do not know her exact age, but suppose it to be about fifteen: perhaps rather more.

And now I must try to get some sleep, or I shall not be able to go through with the expected bustle of the ensuing day.

Mr. Slayton's house is quite full, and he quite delighted. To-morrow we are, I believe, to go to Mansfield.

Being charged with respectful remembrances from the Earl; Lady Caroline, Emma, and Mr. Evelyn, I will, with executing my commission, finish my letter.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XXIII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, Monday, May 4th.

THREE days since the date of my last! during which time I have not been able to find one leisure half hour. Pleasure after pleasure has engrossed my every minute.

On Saturday, as I expected, we *walked* down to Mansfield; two short miles from Oakley Hill; the landau being sent after, for those who might be tired, but it was not accepted by any of us. Without exception, this was the pleasantest ramble which ever fell to my lot to experience.

When we returned we found a servant from Alverston with letters; yours, my dear, for which I return my acknowledgements, amongst the rest; and one from my sister; who does not mention a syllable about the subject respecting herself, which my dear mother, in her last favor, communicated. But she gave me a very laughable account of the courtship between the Honorable Miss Barbara Tupps and the Right Honorable Gregory Beltshazzer, Lord Clutterbuck, a bluff old batchelor lately arrived from the East, to take the title of his uncle, who died last October was a twelvemonth. Rachel, who is too apt to sport upon the deformities of nature, says that this bonny nobleman, (I use her own words) who is almost square in his form, appears in the eye of Miss Barbara *an elegant Personage*.

But I suppose she has transmitted the account to Woodstock; else, I should be half inclined to copy that part of her letter; as it is almost impossible to read it without risibility.

Mr. Evelyn had likewise a letter by the same conveyance. It came from a friend of his in Reading, and contained an account of the bad conduct of his young mother-in-law, who having been discovered in an intrigue with the butler, had robbed her husband of upwards of two hundred guineas, and was gone off with her gallant. The letter says the old gentleman is violently enraged against both the criminals; but professes to be happy that she left him before she increased his family.

Mr. Evelyn means to write immediately to his father, to offer him every consolation in his power to administer; he having, it seems, lamented his own ill behaviour to his son, whom he cannot bring himself to wish to see at present; otherwise Mr. Evelyn would immediately have set off for Berkshire.

Very pleasing arrangements, Maria, have been made respecting the Alverston and Hawthorn Grove Rectories—the last taking its name not from the parish, but the seat of its patron. My enclosed letter to my mother will give the particulars.

Sir Edward, as you will see, has accepted Mr. Evelyn's resignation of Alverston, which it was immediately proposed by Mr. Stanley should be offered to good Mr. Broomley. It therefore *was* offered; but he respectfully requested a few days consideration, as he could not immediately determine about leaving his Kildwick parishioners; but Mr. Maynard says, that as that living will probably at his decease, or resignation, be given to a gentleman who really wants it, he has no doubt but we shall have Mr. Broomley in Derbyshire.

Mr. Stanley, who is highly pleased with Alethea, told her just now in jesting language, but I dare answer for it, with a serious meaning, that he will, if she marries a clergyman, secure the benefice to the man of her choice.

“Then you may depend upon it, sir,” said she, with native vivacity, “I will have a parson if I can get one. But I think I will submit my fate to you; for you have chosen so well for yourself that I am sure you will not determine amiss for me.”

We are all delighted with this lively little girl, who, now she is acquainted with the party, is always entertaining us by sprightly sallies of humour. On *her* account, I think it is probable that Mr. Broomley will consent to live at Alverston, having, at Lady Stanley's request, written to the patron of Kildwick living.

Arrangements have likewise been made respecting the two happy couples, who will probably soon be rendered still happier by an entrance into the conjugal state.

The marriage writings, it seems, of both parties want nothing but signing; so indefatigable has been our Oakley-Hill host; to whose management, I just now learned from Lady Stanley, Sir Charles Conway, unknown to the Alverston family, submitted the intended unexceptionable settlements upon my dear Emma. She, of course, is to reside at Hawthorn Grove. Mr. Slayton has given up Hazle-wood Lodge to Sir Edward and Lady Stanley, who mean to resign Alverston Park when Lady Caroline blesses with her hand the enraptured man of her heart. Mr. Maynard has a seat in Leicestershire: Lord Danvers one in Rutlandshire; another in Suffolk, and several little boxes, like his cottage in Woodstock, in different parts of the kingdom.

Hazle-wood Lodge, as I believe I before observed to you, forms nearly an equilateral triangle with Alverston Park and Hawthorn Grove, and is just mid-way between the first-mentioned place and Oakley Hill; so that no situation can be more desirable for Sir Edward and Lady Stanley than that.

The four elders are, I find, extremely desirous that the weddings should take place before the party separates. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard support the design, and I had just now the honor of being admitted to the consultation; but I doubt the brides elect will not readily submit to such a sudden summons.

The plan they mean, if possible, to pursue, originated, with Sir Charles Conway, who, upon catching the general wish that the two weddings might be celebrated in one day, intimated to Mr. Slayton that no place was more proper for the performance of the ceremonies than Oakley Hill, it being impossible that either of the brides could make any objections of delicacy to it, as it was not the residence of either of the gentlemen. Alverston Park, he said, would not be approved of by Lady Caroline; nor Hawthorn Grove by Miss Stanley; therefore if Mr. Slayton would support the plan, he hoped every one might be brought to agree with his opinion.

Nothing could be more consonant to the wishes of the old Squire than this proposal. It seems he snapped his fingers, and actually jumped for joy; saying (not injudiciously) that Mr. Broomley and Mr. Evelyn—the first for Mr. Stanley and Lady Caroline; the other for Sir Charles Conway and my Emma—should officiate as priests of Hymen; which, he says, he is sure his friend Mr. Graham (to whom the fees will most certainly be presented) will excuse, when he shall be made acquainted with the circumstances.

Emma I doubt will be refractory, and I think Lady Caroline will not be easily reconciled to such hasty conclusions. But they will both find strong opposers to contend with; for as Mr. Slayton has bound *the council* by promise, to support his measures, there will be no resisting the strength of the current; Mr. Stanley's natural precipitance of temper will carry *him* forward, and Sir Charles has so long solicited his Emma to name his day (which upon first one, then another, pretence, she has hitherto declined) that he, I am persuaded, will not relinquish this reinforcement.

Miss Broomley just now asked me—But I am called away. A summons from Mrs. Maynard to attend her in the garden, is brought by Lady Stanley's woman.

* * * * *

I am returned from a walk with the lady, whose summons I obeyed. Her business with me was to consult upon the article of dress for the ensuing affair, which, she says, must and shall be forwarded with all possible expedition.

I asked her if the brides elect had been made acquainted with her resolution.

"No, to be sure," she said; "nor was the information proper; it being right to prepare the altar before the victims were apprized of the intended sacrifice."

And *are* they to be victims, madam? and *will* it be a sacrifice?—asked I. You frighten one out of one's wits. I had hoped—But you know best. I dare not presume to dispute the matter.

"Now, Miss Charlotte," said she archly, "will I be revenged of you for your saucy questions. Depend upon it you shall not escape the punishment you merit: so prepare yourself to be offered

upon the same altar at the same period. Mr. Evelyn”—called she out with a raised voice, stepping forward into a turning walk as if she had seen him—“I just want to speak to you.”

I thought at the instant I should have sunk to the ground; but recollecting myself, I sprang after her, and caught her by the arm, entreating her not to distress me by the least intimation of—

She interrupted me by a hearty laugh, and bid me then be good, or she would put in execution her meditated revenge.

As no Mr. Evelyn appeared, I was soon somewhat tranquilized (though I really am still sensible of a tremor) and, being joined by Lady Stanley, we consulted about proper dresses for the connubial day.

A genteel dishabille was determined upon, though Mr. Slayton had insisted upon inviting all his friends within the vicinity, which are, some of them, people of high rank; amongst whom are the Earl and Countess of Stradbroke; with Lord Dennington, and Lady Sophia Sommerville. Lord Eastcourt; his second sister, Miss Amelia Hamilton, with a son and daughter of Lord Playton’s. Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont—who are at this time upon a visit to Lord Eastcourt. Sir James Harrison; his celebrated lady, and her sister. Captain John Ashton; Captain Billington; Mr. Charles Wyndham, and a great many others which I have no inclination to particularize.

On account of this intended brilliant assemblage, it was necessary we should be as smart as undress would allow; therefore it was determined that Lady Stanley should wear a mazarine-blue spotted with silver. Mrs. Maynard a peach-blossom. Miss Broomley and your Charlotte, as bridesmaids, simple white lustrings, which are to be made at Mansfield with all possible expedition. Similar dresses are likewise to be provided for the two Miss Grahams; daughters to the clergyman before mentioned; the eldest of which, with Miss Broomley, is to devote herself to Lady Caroline; the youngest and myself to attend Miss Stanley.

The dress of the brides now only remained to be concluded upon; but that we were obliged to postpone; for as there was not time (nor indeed any occasion, till their making what is called an appearance and receiving company) to provide new ones, it was necessary to gain some intelligence of what clothes they had with them suitable for such an occasion. Mr. Slayton, before he left London, had intimated that he should not part with his friends in a hurry when once he got them to Oakley-Hill, and that therefore the ladies must take care to provide themselves *with a good quantity of rigging*—to speak in his own phrase; for which reason the trunks were well stored with spring-garments; but what Miss Stanley had taken with her—or what Lady Caroline—that would suit the purpose we did not know, for we have been too much engaged to make dress the subject of our conversation, and have not yet had occasion for any change, except for church yesterday, when Lady Caroline wore a dark silk and Miss Stanley a light blue, neither of which were thought to be proper for the *day of days*. I was therefore dispatched to the two ladies who with Miss Broomley, were sitting in the library, with a command to enter into such a conversation as would lead to a disclosure of the contents of their travelling wardrobes. I obeyed; was successful, and returned to my directoresses with the account; who determined upon an elegant muslin, striped and sprigged with silver, for Miss Stanley, and another, with gold cords and spots for Lady Caroline; both to be worn over petticoats of plain white sattinet. The head-dresses to be left to their own fancy.

This article settled, we were next to endeavour to bring the two ladies to consent to the design, and I was deputed to hint the matter to Emma, that when Sir Charles should importune her compliance, she might know it was *expected* she would oblige him. Mrs. Maynard undertook to prepare her cousin to listen to Mr. Stanley on the same subject.

We all now went into the library, where we were soon joined by the gentlemen, who had, we understood, been preparing some fishing tackle, that they might amuse us by drawing a large pond about half a mile distant. We therefore equipped ourselves to accompany them, and were very much entertained with their labours.

But I must lay aside my pen and dress for dinner, as we are to have a large company to day at Oakley Hill. Amongst the foremost—the Earl and Countess of Stradbroke; Lord Dennington; Lady Sophia Somerville; Mr. Graham, and the two young ladies; Mr. Charles Wyndham; Captain John Ashton; Miss Anna Rawlinson, and Mrs. Larkin; to whom Miss Rawlinson is upon a visit.

Monday night, almost 12 o'clock.

We have had a very pleasant party, which have but just left us. I should like to lead you through our amusements, but am, as usual, too full of business. The Miss Grahams are very agreeable young ladies; the eldest quite accomplished; the other—Miss Lucy—the prettiest, demure little thing I ever saw. I have some idea of her being in love; for though she has a very good understanding, and is extremely good-natured, she is prim; pensive, and continually sighing.

But now for other intelligence.

After I was dressed, Emma asked me to take a walk in the pleasure-ground; we being ready a considerable time before the company arrived. I complied, and we soon began an interesting conversation.

At length I asked her if she did not mean to give any orders about clothes for the approaching occasion.

“What occasion, Charlotte?” asked she, looking with surprise.

No affectation, Emma, said I. You *must* know that I mean for your own and your brother’s wedding.

“Neither my brother nor myself,” replied Miss Stanley, “are yet going to be married, I dare answer for it.”

Do not be too positive, my dear girl, returned I, lest you should find yourself mistaken.

“What do you mean, Charlotte?”—asked she, with quickness.

That Lady Caroline Pemberton, said I, looking at her with a smile, will soon drop the name

of her family; and that you, ere many days, will be Lady Conway.

The dear girl looked astonished; again exclaiming—"What do you mean?"

I mean what I say, child, returned I; so prepare yourself for a compliance.

Sir Charles at that instant appeared in sight. Emma's cheek was of a crimson hue in a moment. "Ah! Charlotte," said she, "this is treachery! This is a scheme against me!"

How can that be, I asked, when this walk was proposed by yourself?

"Well, leave me not; leave me not"—said she, speaking in a hurry, and taking hold of my arm. "Promise but to stay with me, or I fear"—

Sir Charles was now advanced, and catching her last words—"Of what is my Emma afraid?" he asked; "and why," taking her hand, "does she thus tremble?"

"We must not now be interrupted, Sir Charles," said she, "Miss Lawson and I were earnest in conversation, and wish to be by ourselves."

"Strange," replied he, "that I appear to doubt my lovely girl's veracity; but I cannot obey till Miss Lawson confirms that wish to be mutual."

Upon my word, said I, preventing Miss Stanley's reply, it is a wish in which I take no part: on the contrary, I particularly desire the subject in which we were engaged—

"My dear Charlotte," said Emma, looking at me with earnestness, "what are you about to say! For goodness sake"—

"The apprehensions of my Emma," said Sir Charles, "lead me to suspect what the subject was; and you, Miss Lawson, will, I hope, support me in my request, if I now urge for the greatest favor I can ever receive."

The dear Emma seemed ready to sink upon the ground. Indeed I believe she could not have walked three steps farther, which Sir Charles, with evident concern, observing, seated her on a bench that was near at hand, and placed me on one side of her; sitting down himself upon the other: then looking at her with inexpressible tenderness, and taking one hand, his arm being thrown round to support her, he said, in an accent expressive of affection and respect—

"My beloved Emma well knows that it is painful to me to be the occasion of giving her the least discomposure, yet as the subject upon which I am about to speak is of too much importance—I hope to both—to be deferred for smaller considerations, she will pardon me if I press for a compliance to the earnest entreaty I must make for more perfect happiness.

"I speak, madam, without prefacing my petition, that I may as soon as possible relieve you from a subject which, I am sorry to see, is so painful to you."

“It is not, sir—it is not because”—stammered out the blushing Emma, but could not speak another syllable. So greatly confused was she at the unexpected attack.

“My lovely girl!” said Sir Charles, looking at her with rapture, “I cannot bear thus to distress you. Allow me, therefore, to apply to your Charlotte, and let me conclude upon her answer.”

“O no, no!” she cried, “I dare not—I dare not permit”—

“I thank you, madam, for that confession,” interrupted the happy man.—“Your Charlotte then will decide in my favor. Miss Lawson, what reward shall I offer to induce you to fix an early day for making me one of the happiest of sublunary beings?”

I ask no reward, Sir Charles, returned I, with a smile. My disposition is so philanthropic, that I love to oblige for obliging sake; therefore if Lady Caroline Pemberton will submit to my award, I shall have the pleasure to attend a very happy party to church next Thursday.

Poor Emma knew not which way to look. She endeavoured to disengage herself from Sir Charles, and half out of breath, exclaimed,—“My dear Miss Lawson, how can you thus”—

And now, said I, unmindful of Emma’s exclamation, I must leave you sir to plead my pardon; for I fear I have grievously offended. But you are so far from being bound by my decision, that if you can prevail for a still earlier day, my approbation will attend the alteration.

At which I arose, and, notwithstanding Emma’s endeavour to detain me, turned down into an avenue near which we sat, and was out of their sight in an instant.

I then went in quest of Mrs. Maynard, whom I found in her dressing-room, with Lady Caroline sitting by her. Seeing them look very grave, I just entered the room, and was about to retire, but Mrs. Maynard hastily arose, and requested me to return; when seating me near her, she told me she had been acquainting her cousin with the universal wish, and was sorry to find her so averse to oblige such a number of her friends.

“My dear Harriet,” said Lady Caroline, with a little warmth, “do you consider how lately it is that Mr. Stanley made any direct address to me? I wonder you can support such a cause!”

“Bad as you may think it,” replied Mrs. Maynard, “you will be borne down by its torrent; depend upon it. Why, child, your father and I are at the very head of the plan! And when did you ever succeed in opposing any thing we joined in?”

“Too surely never,” said the lovely creature; “because you”—

“Never joined in any thing unreasonable,” added her cousin. “But as to direct address — Pray had you not enough of that as Maria Birtles?”

“A great deal too much,” returned she, “when I was in that character; but in such a

manner”—

“A fiddle faddle for the manner,” again broke in this lively woman; “the manner was not so much amiss, except you have told me fibs, considering what you appeared to be. But answer me before Miss Lawson one question. Do you not prefer Mr. Stanley to all the men you know in the world?”

“What a strange creature you are, Harriet!” said Lady Caroline: “but I will not pay Miss Lawson so ill a compliment to deny, because she is present, what you know I have acknowledged in her absence. I *do* prefer Mr. Stanley to all the men I know.” At which she blushed; turned her eyes down, and looked sweetly confused.

I could not forbear to raise her hand to my lips, and thank her for the enviable honor of her confidence.

Her reply was too flattering for me to repeat; but it pleased me greatly.

“You are a good girl upon the whole, Caroline,” said Mrs. Maynard; “and after what you have said, will not be angry if I ask you one or two more questions.

“Do you not intend to be Lady Caroline Stanley one day or other?”

"To that question, Harriet," said her ladyship, "you cannot want any answer."

“Well then,” returned Mrs. Maynard, “taking it for granted *that you do*, what can prevent a young woman so much above affectation and false delicacy, as you always were, from obliging so many friends on both sides; not one of whom would wish you to do a thing the least improper; especially in a case of such importance?”

“Indeed, Harriet, you distress me,” said her ladyship.

“But *why*, Caroline,” enquired Mrs. Maynard, “are you distressed? Do you think that your advisers are not competent judges of true delicacy?”

“I know you *are* competent judges of delicacy,” replied she; “but—”

“But *what*, Caroline?” asked her cousin. “Are you not convinced of the sincerity and disinterestedness of Mr. Stanley’s affection?”

“Indeed I am;” said this enchanting beauty, with another crimson blush, “but still—”

“Pray Miss Lawson,” said Mrs. Maynard, “permit my appealing to you. Let us have your sentiments on the subject we are debating.”

I will not presume to *advise* Lady Caroline, said I, but my *wishes* are that you, madam, may be successful in what you have undertaken.

"And are you serious, Miss Lawson?" asked her ladyship.

Indeed I am, I replied; and must take the liberty to observe, that your refusal to indulge the wishes of all around you, not only delays to make happy the man in whose happiness you candidly acknowledge to have an interest, but likewise that of Sir Charles Conway; as I am convinced Miss Stanley will recall whatever consent she may by this time conditionally have given to be Lady Conway, ere another week elapses, except a consideration for her brother's felicity induces her to confirm her compliance. And can Lady Caroline Pemberton endure to hold in suspense the happiness of all around her, when by completing that of others, she will, I hope, insure her own?

"Oh, Miss Lawson," returned she, "how you press upon me! But has Miss Stanley indeed consented to such an early day?"

Thursday, replied I, has been named to her, but whether or not she will abide by the nomination I cannot tell. I just now left Sir Charles Conway with her in the garden, and think it probable she will be induced to give such a consent as your ladyship can either annul or confirm.

"You know not, my dear friends," said Lady Caroline, "how you distress me. So early—so very early to think of giving"—

"Well, well"—said Mrs. Maynard, rising from her chair—"we will not pursue this subject. I hear the rattling of carriages, and presume our company will be expected below-stairs. Mr. Stanley must settle this matter for himself. He has already indulged the hope that you will not, thus circumstanced, remain obdurate, You will therefore soon hear from him upon the subject, and to him I refer you for better reasoning."

"O my dear cousin!" exclaimed Lady Caroline, "let me not be left to argue this case with him! I cannot yet enter into this subject with Mr. Stanley."

"Your servant, sweet cuz!" returned Mrs. Maynard. "You are a coward I see. Pray is it the badness of your cause, or the eloquence of the pleader, that awakens your apprehensions? But come, come along girls. Let *me* conduct you to the company in the drawing-room."

Just as she had spoken, her woman entered the room to tell us that Lady Stanley requested our appearance below, as the Earl and Countess of Stradbroke; Lord Dennington, and Lady Sophia Sommerville, were arrived; and Mr. Graham, with the two young ladies, just at hand.

We therefore hastened down, and were met at the bottom of the stairs by Mr. Stanley, who was coming out of the picture-closet, as Mr. Slayton terms a room furnished with very beautiful paintings. He instantly advanced to Lady Caroline, and said—taking both her hands with a gallant air—"Five minutes, madam; only five minutes before you join the company"—drawing her to the closet from whence he had issued.

"O no; no, sir!" said she, resisting, "I cannot; indeed I cannot—Harriet! Miss Lawson! do not, pray do not go without me."

We smiled; bowed, and went on; leaving her a little cruelly, I have since thought, without any attention to her entreaty.

Mrs. Maynard afterwards informed me that Mr. Stanley had been breathing forth to her his ardent wishes that her lovely cousin would not condemn him to a long—novitiate—was his expression; and entreating her to use her influence in curtailing the tedious state of expectation which he dreaded the outrageousness of female punctilio—he would not, he said, call it delicacy—would consign him to.

After teasing him a little, which she dearly loves to do, she intimated the plan in agitation, though she had bound Sir Charles not to divulge one syllable of it, on pain of her opposing his designs; alledging, that Mr. Stanley's precipitance would destroy all her endeavours to bring Lady Caroline to yield, if he was too importunate before she had prepared her, by laying before her the wishes of her friends. On this consideration, Sir Charles consented to keep the plan a secret; therefore when Mrs. Maynard gave Mr. Stanley a hint of it this morning, he seemed transported beyond himself at the unexpected intention of his friends in his favor, and determined immediately to make his advantage of it by pressing his Caroline to comply with a wish so universally espoused, and hastily arose to go in instant pursuit of her, nor could Mrs. Maynard prevent him till she assured him he would destroy his own hopes by his haste, and promised to go directly and prepare her cousin to expect the proposal; therefore, without waiting for a confirmation that the promise had been performed, he seized the first moment of Lady Caroline's appearance to urge his suit, and for that end drew her, as I before said, into the picture-closet; Mrs. Maynard and I going immediately into the drawing-room, where, as soon as introductions were properly over, I seated myself in one of the windows by Miss Stanley, and, without speaking, looked at her as if supplicating for pardon: she understood me, and exclaimed—"Wicked Charlotte! I will *not* forgive you, but lay up the injury in my memory till an opportunity offers for retaliation; and then, depend upon it, I will be most gloriously revenged!"

I trembled at the idea of the terrible effects of her resentment, and earnestly implored an oblivion to my offence; but instead of being pacified, she redoubled her threatenings, and dared me to tell her if my conduct had been consistent with that golden rule *of doing as I would wish to be done by*.

Without replying to her question, I told her with an assumed humility, that I sincerely solicited her forgiveness, as, from the violence of her resentment, I feared the effects of my offence would be dreadful, apprehending she had, in consequence, been plunged into a deplorable situation from which she would never recover! I then begged to know *the extent* of the crime I had committed.

She would not answer me; but demanded where Lady Caroline Pemberton was.

Undergoing, I fear, said I, the same kind of persecution from which you, though, I doubt not, without some loss, have so lately escaped.

"Oh my stars!" she exclaimed, "what shall I now do! If *she* gives way—if *she* consents—

and who can withstand the torrent of George's precipitating temper!—If Lady Caroline be not firm, I am gone. Horrid Charlotte! this, like-wise, is of your concerting."

I endeavoured to exculpate myself from being any way concerned in the last incident; but she did not—or pretended she did not believe me. I therefore motioned to Sir Charles Conway that I wished to speak to him, upon which he advanced to us, and I began with desiring him to procure for me his Emma's forgiveness.

"My Emma," said he, "does not, I hope, find herself offended by what I consider as the greatest proof of friendship which could be offered to me, and by which I am so much obliged, that I shall ever think myself a debtor for the favor till I can—*return it in kind*. What say you, my dear Miss Stanley—shall we join in an act which will at once acquit me of obligation, and gratify your resentment?"

"With all my heart," returned she. "That is the only method to reconcile me to either the culprit or myself. Where is Mr. Evelyn? Do, Sir Charles, tell him I want to speak with him this instant."

Happily for me, Sir Charles was just then summoned away. A servant entered to inform him that a gentleman in the saloon wished to speak with him. I was glad of this, as I was now very serious in requesting Emma to consider at how early a period she jested upon a subject of such consequence to my future happiness; and so effectually convinced her of the pain she gave me, that she promised to be cautious *in some measure*; yet vowed she would some times return a few of the rubs I had, at different period, given *her*.

I never remember Miss Stanley to look more beautiful than she has done this day. A kind of a pensive air softened the vivacity of her features; which, by rendering more visible the native tenderness of her heart, made her still more charming than when in higher spirits. Not that she was low: she was only *placid*; and now and then a little absent. Sir Charles seemed to observe her with rapture. Her dress, I believe, which was blue, was particularly becoming to her, and her head-dress, something of the turban kind, extremely pretty.

We now joined the general conversation, which, for a few minutes, we had, perhaps, rather too much neglected; but the liveliness of Mrs. Maynard's manners, well supplied our inattention.

Lady Caroline entered just before dinner was announced; and the moment she appeared every eye was rivetted to her. She is, to be sure, a most unexceptionable beauty, and the graceful manner of her entering a room, strikes the beholders with no less love than admiration. Lady Caroline's dress was a purple silk; and her cap (entirely her own fancy) exactly suited to her features. The colour in her cheeks was of a finer pink than ordinary, and an agreeable perplexity appeared in her eyes, which increased their lustre. I afterwards understood she had had a most fatiguing contest with Mr. Stanley.

The striking characteristic in the face of both Emma and Lady Caroline, is, I think, sweetness of disposition; yet there is a direct opposition in the *style* of their beauty: the features of the first, are assisted by a pleasing vivacity; the other, by an agreeable serenity. Between the two, all the variety

of female charms appear to be monopolized, and it may be said of these beauties, with at least as much propriety as it was of the Grecian and Italian poets—

“The force of Nature” can “no farther go.
“To make a third she” must unite the “two.”

I should have told you that just before the entrance of Lady Caroline, the rest of the expected guests arrived, ushered in by Mr. Stanley, of whose animated behaviour on the occasion it is needless to animadvert; as every one who has any idea of his character, will see it in their “mind’s eye.”

The day has been an agreeable one; and when I tell you that Mr. Evelyn made use of a favorable opportunity to address some particular conversation to me, relative to his future residence at Hawthorn Grove, you will think—But think what you will. I grow hardened from being so continually tormented by the teasing creatures here.

But this man—you know whom I mean—had the audacity to intimate a wish that the same day which is to enslave Lady Caroline Pemberton and Miss Stanley, might witness your poor Charlotte’s enthralldom likewise. Was there ever any thing so presuming. Had he talked about that day’s *anniversary*, I might not have thought him so *very* unreasonable. But *thus soon*—I had not patience with him, Maria, and was about to give him a very hearty chiding when we were interrupted.

And now, no more egotizing.

We have had quite a superb entertainment to day. Hospitality is a distinguishable trait in Mr. Slayton’s character. He is immensely rich, and he *loves* riches; but he likes to *spend* as well as *get* money; and that with almost profuseness.

Our visitors, of whom, had I leisure, I would give you a particular account, returned home to supper, and, after their departure, a general eclairsissement took place relative to the matrimonial business; an account of which, I must defer till my next, adding no more to this than that I am my
dear Maria’s

ever affectionate

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XXIV.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MISS LAWSON.

Stanton, fourth day of fifth month.

THY letter, my dearest Charlotte, dated fifth day, reached me on seventh day evening, and early the next morning I sent a messenger with it to thy mother and aunt. I cannot express the surprise we experienced when we understood the intelligence it conveyed. Almost beyond imagination it astonished, entertained and delighted us. The attention of my dear aunt Stanhope was deeply absorbed by every line. But I must not indulge in any endeavour to give an idea of our sensations and sentiments on this truly novel history of the lovely Caroline; yet I can hardly forbear the subject; which, however, I must fly from. My aunt desireth me to unite with my own, her best respects to every one of thy party whom she hath the pleasure of knowing; amongst which number thou, Charlotte, wilt not forget thy Herbert Evelyn is to be reckoned. I doubt, I doubt thy future residence at Woodstock, will not be long continued: but we will not anticipate—I was going to say misfortunes, Charlotte.

About one o'clock this day we reached Stanton, where I found my friend Eliza Brewster, who is, if possible, more lively than ever. Henry Colville is likewise here. He returned with his sister and brother from Leicestershire. Eliza expects soon to be married to Richard Parker, or I should almost think that Henry and she were upon a more than friendly footing. I have found them twice this afternoon in close conversation, which they discontinued upon my approach; but I once heard Eliza say—"Ah Henry! thou betrayest thyself every minute; however, I will keep thy secret."

I must own I thought this rather particular; but as it did not, you know, concern me, I would not seem to observe it. Eliza is a pretty girl, and Henry Colville is formed to excite esteem. If she were not already engaged, I do not know where she could make a better choice. I hope he will meet with an agreeable partner, and I wish Eliza Brewster to have a good husband; so that their union would be what I could wish, for both; and yet it doth not seem likely that it will be effected.

But how I prate about subjects foreign to my chief intent of writing! which is to inform thee that I have leave from my aunt to tell thee that I may expect to set out for Derbyshire in about ten days, as friend Harley's cousin, Patty Henderson, thinks of going, about that time, into Yorkshire; and though Derby is not her direct road, will go through it upon my account.

I seem to have much to say to thee, Charlotte, and yet I know not what it is about. But I must hasten to finish, as Eliza will be impatient for my return.

Thine, in true affection,
MARIA LEWIS.

LETTER, XXV.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, Wednesday, May 6th.

I could not, my dear Maria, find leisure to write one syllable yesterday, and yet I wish you to have the thread of this story unbroken; so now to begin where I left off—As soon as the visitors—

But I am interrupted.

* * * * *

—And an agreeable interruption it was. Your letter, my dear friend, dated Monday, was put into my hands as I laid down my pen. What shall I say to it, Maria? Not what I think, I do assure you; and that you will look upon to be very strange: but there is a time for all things, my dear, and the time for my telling you my sentiments upon the major part of what you have written, is not yet arrived. To another point then—your coming to Alverston.

As soon as I had read your letter I went down, and communicated to the party your intention of being soon in Derbyshire, which gave a universal pleasure; not less I verily think to those who do not, than to those who *do* know you personally. Mr. Stanley is quite impatient to see the little Quaker-girl, of whom he has been told so much; and Sir Charles Conway insists upon being one of the deputed to escort you from Derby. Miss Broomley anticipates the happiness of having a counterpart in company; for she says she seems so alone—so unpaired—while every one else is attended by a lover, that she looks forward to you as a great relief.

The demureness arising from a domestic education, is in this little girl so agreeably contrasted by native wildness, that her character is quite novel. Her understanding is excellent; her disposition very sweet; and, when she is in a small circle, she speaks whatever her heart dictates in the most artless manner imaginable. Amongst those who particularly enjoy, in expectation, the arrival of my Maria, Lady Caroline Pemberton and Miss Stanley ought to be mentioned with distinction. I cannot tell you half the affectionate things they said upon the occasion. Lord Danvers likewise spoke very respectfully of both your aunt and you; telling Mr. Broomley he thought he would be particularly pleased with Mrs. Stanhope, as the Christian and the gentlewoman are distinguishably united in her character.

Mr. Broomley answered the earl's implied compliment by a bow; saying, at the same time, that Mrs. Stanhope is of that sect which deserves respect from both church and state; as the general tenor of their principles forbid them to disturb either.

This reverend man is a great ornament to our circle, and considered as such by us all. Mr. Maynard says he looks upon him as a second father, and that he sometimes can scarce forbear to address him by that appellation.

But to the business of the day.

As soon as our visitors left Oakley Hill, Mrs. Maynard summoned a female cabinet; ordering Lady Caroline and Emma to attend, and requesting Lady Stanley and me to assist her in passing judgment on the two she termed criminals. The court of judicature was the picture-closet. As soon as we were seated, she directly opened the business, demanding of Miss Stanley what answer she had given to Sir Charles Conway relative to the wedding-day. Emma looked somewhat surprised, and evaded the question. She then appealed to Lady Caroline, who, likewise, evaded her inquiries. However, after a great deal of cross questioning and as much cross answering, [I cannot lead you through the whole, though it would, I am sure, much entertain you] they were brought to acknowledge that, after a long contest with the gentlemen, they had referred to each other, and at length to consent to abide by the decision of Lord Danvers and Mrs. Maynard for Lady Caroline; and of Sir Edward and Lady Stanley for their Emma. I was then sent to summon the two fathers, and when they arrived it was soon determined—Emma's fate being first fixed—that Miss Stanley and Lady Caroline Pemberton should ON TUESDAY NEXT, receive and pay the nuptial vows at the Altar; that Mr. Broomley should perform one ceremony, and Mr. Evelyn the other, and that the Earl and Sir Edward should each present his daughter to her lover: the arrangements respecting dress and bride-maids, remaining as before settled.

After every thing was determined upon, the fathers went to announce the decision to the rest of the party who were still in the drawing-room. When they were gone, Emma said it was a very strange piece of business, and she did not understand its having been so hastily concluded upon. Lady Caroline maintained a perfect silence, but her countenance spoke her to be deep in thought. However they were awakened from their expressed and silent animadversions by the entrance of Sir Charles Conway and Mr. Stanley, who, in the best chosen terms of fervency and politeness, made their acknowledgments, first to Lady Caroline and Emma for their condescension, as they termed it, and then to Lady Stanley, Mrs. Maynard and myself, for our interposition in their favor; without which they (rather ungratefully, Emma told them) questioned their having had so near a view of happiness. A great many agreeable things passed upon the occasion. But I got some pretty severe rubs amongst them, for which your gentle mind, had you been present, would I think have pitied me. George was unmerciful. I was obliged to call upon Lady Stanley to reduce him to order.

A servant, by Mr. Slayton's command, now appeared to ask if it would be agreeable to have supper within a quarter of an hour. An answer was given in the affirmative, and Lady Stanley proposed our previously adjourning to the drawing-room, where, when we arrived, general congratulations took place, and the business of Tuesday was talked upon with unreserve; which gave relief to all around. Mr. Maynard's address to his cousin-elect was truly elegant.

Mr. Broomley gave *the devoted victims* a previous benediction; to which Mr. Evelyn requested to add his Amen.

Mr. Slayton expressed his joy in his own manner. The two fathers again spoke the happiness which the prospect afforded them, and the little Alethea, quite delighted at the idea of being a bride-maid, made a very pretty native compliment to the two queens of the hour.

After this, the evening passed away in the most agreeable manner possible. It seemed to be

the wish of every one to please and be pleased, and we parted not till a very late hour, yet were all up early the next morning, and as soon as breakfast was over, Mr. Slayton, Miss Broomley and myself, walked to Mr. Graham's, and, under the seal of secrecy, imparted to them the arrangements which, the evening before, had been made at the Manor-House—as that of Mr. Slayton's is always termed. Mr. Graham politely agreed to every proposition, and they all promised to obey the injunction of secrecy; whereupon I began to settle with Miss Broomley and the two sisters, the more minute articles respecting our appearance, soon fixing upon going to church in white silk scarfs and bonnets; white lustring gowns and petticoats having, as I told you, been previously determined upon for us damsels in waiting.

We now, attended by Miss Graham (Mr. Graham promising to join us at dinner) returned to Mr. Slayton's, when Mr. Maynard's landau was immediately ordered to convey us to Mansfield, where we were accompanied by Lady Stanley and Mrs. Maynard; leaving the three elder gentlemen and Mr. Maynard in the study, surrounded by papers, parchments, &c. and Mr. Evelyn writing in the library; while *the happy four* devoted the hours of our absence to a walk in the gardens.

At Mansfield we settled all the mantua and millenary matters, returning, soon after two, to Oakley Hill, where we found Lady Caroline and Emma sitting together in a woodbine bower; the two gentlemen having just before been sent for into the library, to give the final sentence respecting the settlements; which are truly noble on all sides.

Mr. Graham arrived before dinner, and entered into a consultation with Mr. Broomley and Mr. Evelyn, relative to licences and such matters; which was presently over, and we were all assembled in the drawing-room when Mr. Graham, who had been called out, returned with a beautiful youth about seventeen, whom he begged leave to introduce to the company, informing us it was his son Robert, who was unexpectedly arrived from Westminster.

This young man who is destined for the church has never confined his hair, which is a light brown, and falls in beautiful rings about his shoulders. His cheeks glow with the bloom of health, and his eyes sparkle with intelligence.

I told Miss Broomley in a whisper, that I fancied I saw in Mr. Robert Graham the future Rector of Alverston; at which she burst into a flood of tears. I was surprised at her emotion, and requested the reason of her being so affected. She could not speak for some time, but at last sobbed out that I had raised an idea of the death of her dear grandfather, as she doubted not but, on Mr. Yates's account, he would be induced to give up Kildwick. I could not forbear giving the lovely girl a kiss upon her cheek, as we were screened from observation by two or three of the company in conversation before us, and afterwards, in her absence, reported the affectionate sensation to her great advantage in our original party; upon which I saw a tear of paternal gratitude—if I may so express myself—steal down the cheek of the venerable Divine.

To return from this little anecdote—we finished the evening with a concert of vocal and instrumental music; in which Miss Graham bore a most distinguished part; her voice being melodious in a remarkable degree.

This day, it being a moist one, has been devoted to working; reading; writing, etcetera. To-

morrow we are to go to Hazle-wood Lodge, to see and order what alterations are necessary to be made for the reception of Sir Edward and Lady Stanley, who, as I have said, determine to make that their future residence. For some time to come, it is probable we shall make but one family, as, after we shall have received company and returned the visits, we are all to go to London; from thence to some of the earl's seat in the country; not neglecting his Woodstock cottage; and to finish our ramble at Mr. Maynard's Leicestershire residence. This is the plan which we mean to pursue, if nothing beyond our view prevents us. By the time of its being completed, autumn will warn us of the approach of winter; when the party intends to settle into families.

I have not quite finished my intelligence; but must attend below-stairs.

Wednesday evening.

Mr. Broomley has just received a letter from Sir Peter Rowley, his Kildwick patron, which determines him to accept of Alverston. Mr. Yates, the worthy gentleman who is to succeed him at Kildwick, writes likewise, and is all gratitude upon the joyful occasion; as Mr. Broomley in his letter to Sir Peter concluded upon resigning it, if it was his intention to give Mr. Yates the next turn. This I did not, before, properly understand. Mr. Yates offers to Mr. Broomley to exchange duty with him at any time that he may wish to visit his old flock; which, he says, will always be glad to see its greatly revered teacher; whose example he shall be earnestly desirous to follow. Two young gentlemen—the one from Derby, the other a visiter at Mr. Letsom's—are to officiate at Alverston and Hawthorn Grove till the present engagements shall have been fulfilled.

It is expected our travelling party will consist of the Earl of Danvers; Sir Edward and Lady Stanley; Mr. and Miss Broomley; Mr. Slayton; Mr. Evelyn; the new-married four; Mr. and Mrs. Maynard; my Maria, and her Charlotte; besides several female attendants. What a groupe will there be of us!

Shall I tell you how much the idea of your making one in it, adds to my pleasure? I will not; but leave it to your own imagination.

We are to have carriages sufficient to accommodate us all; with led horses for both gentlemen and ladies, if the weather should invite us younger ones to form a cavalcade. Mr. Maynard is to be steward-general; but the expences are to devolve upon Lord Danvers; Sir Edward Stanley, and Mr. Slayton.

Our female attendants are to be four in number. One for Lady Caroline and Mrs. Maynard; another for the then Lady Conway and myself; a third for you and Miss Broomley; the fourth, a little girl whom Lady Stanley has taken to supply the place of Mrs. Moore, whose dissolution, poor woman! will probably come on before our return; she being in a deep consumption, and pronounced incurable by the physicians, who, however, still constantly attend her by Lady Stanley's direction.

Mr. Broomley is to set out for Kildwick as soon as the nuptial ceremony is over, and to return with all the expedition circumstances will allow. His Alethea, out of genuine affection, was desirous to accompany him; but as he means to bring to Alverston an elderly woman of the name of D'Oyley, who, since the death of Mrs. Broomley, (which happened about nine years back) has superintended his family, it is thought best she should continue with us; as Mrs. D'Oyley will

doubtless take care to have what clothes, et cetera, Miss Broomley has left behind, properly conveyed.

And now I must lay aside my pen and ink for a day or two to come. To-morrow, as I told you, we are to go to Hazle-wood Lodge: on Friday to Lord Stradbroke's: on Saturday to Nottingham, to take a view of the castle: on Sunday to church: on Monday to—I know not where; AND on Tuesday—to the awful ceremony; for after all, Maria, gay as, at Oakley Hill, the face of matrimony appears, there is something very solemn in such a material change of situation; which (except we experience a melancholy deprivation) must continue throughout the term of our existence.

How incumbent then is it upon every one, whether man or woman, who thinks of entering this state, to determine upon such a mode of conduct as will be most likely to render it a happy one! The plan must be laid down and pursued in the beginning; as, in general, I believe, the first year or two will fix “the colour of our fate” for life! a reform in the conjugal constitution being, I fancy, very difficult to effect.

But what a preacher am I grown! You will think I have the subject very deeply at heart. And can it be otherwise when my beloved friend, from earliest remembrance, is going to plunge into the abyss!

But I have a piece of intelligence for you, Maria. Henry Colville is well known to both Mr. and Mrs. Maynard; the place of his residence not being more than a dozen miles from their seat in Leicestershire, where they have often seen him before they went abroad, when he was a visiter to the late Mr. Selby.

This, my dear, is not an unpleasant circumstance. We shall probably see Mr. Colville during our abode with Mr. Maynard, who, with his lady, desires I will convey remembrances to him, if he should be at Stanton when you receive this letter.

With which commission I will bid you farewell.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

I doubt not your sending this letter to my mother and aunt the first possible opportunity.

LETTER, XXVI.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, Monday, May 11th.

THE day before THE DAY is now arrived, and so sincerely do I find myself interested in all that concerns my dear Emma, that I seem to tremble at the nearness of its approach. Yet with such a prospect as her's to look to, what is there unpleasant to apprehend? Yet again—There is not any thing in this sublunary world that has a certainty of continuance.

“O Charlotte,” you will say, “correct thyself; dispel those unworthy fears, and confide in the All-directing hand, which will ever lead the creatures that submit to its guidance.”

Of this great truth, Maria, I am indeed convinced, which makes all doubting doubly reprehensible. But *I do not doubt*. I only seem to be sensible of a *tremor* when I think of Miss Stanley’s fate being so near a decision. However, I will endeavour to drop all ideas but those which conduce to gaiety of countenance.

Monday night, near eleven.

I snatch a few minutes before I sleep, to tell you that the writings were all signed about seven o’clock, and every thing finished ready for the morning. Lady Caroline and Emma conducted themselves with as much propriety as could be expected upon such an occasion; but not without being pretty much affected. However every eye was expressive of the most lively satisfaction; though those of the two brides-elect shone through a moistened medium; but they tried to smile. Lady Stanley’s cheek was not quite dry, and I was obliged to twinkle away the gathering tear. As to Mrs. Maynard—she laughed at us all round, and asked *me*, in particular, why I looked so demurely; pursuing her humour till she insensibly brought every one of us into a lively train, and the evening was concluded with hilarity.

Whether or not I shall have leisure for one line before we go to church, must depend upon circumstances.

Farewell.
C.L.

LETTER, XXVII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, May 12th.

TUESDAY IS COME. The clock now strikes six, and I am already dressed. Apprehensive my dear Emma might want my attendance, I requested Mrs. Morgan [the housekeeper] to let me be awakened by her order as soon as she was stirring, and the good woman herself was at my bedside soon after five. I arose at the instant, creeping about the room like a thief, lest I should disturb the sleepers.

The morning is as fine a one as I ever saw, and promises as bright a day.

May the blessing of Heaven be showered upon those whose fate it will probably decide.

And now, for the present, adieu to sentiment. Matters of fact only shall employ my pen; for if I allow myself to think too deeply, I shall appear to be more serious than will suit the occasion. But I seem very different to what I did last night. My heart is disposed for mirth, and every thing around looks bright and lively.

I forgot to tell you what an unreasonable quantity of cake is arrived from London. It was unpacked yesterday, and we were taken into the housekeeper's room to look at it. Some of it is to be sent to Hawthorn Grove; and some to Alverston; the rest to be distributed at Oakley Hill.

Invitations have been given and accepted by almost all the gentry round. I would copy you the list of them, but I am now as much too busy, as I was last night too thoughtful, to be particular on several little incidents with which I intended you should have been made acquainted.

Miss and Miss Lucy Graham are expected every minute. Their brother is likewise to attend; with Mr. Brereton; Colonel Holland, and Captain Royden; these last three (gentlemen from Derby) being sent to, express, yesterday by Mr. Slayton; and Mrs. Morgan tells me a servant is come forward to give information of their arrival at Mansfield, with their intention of being speedily at Oakley Hill.

Mr. Brereton made the tour of Europe with Sir Charles Conway and Mr. Stanley; and Colonel Holland and Captain Royden, now stationed at Derby, are relations of the Warburton-family. These are three very sensible, polite and agreeable men. Captain Royden is reckoned particularly handsome.

* * * * *

As I wrote the word handsome, Miss Stanley called. I instantly went to her bedside, and found her under some little concern at having slept so long, lest the company should arrive before she could be seen. She then immediately arose, and, every thing being in readiness, her dress was very soon completed, when she made a most lovely appearance. Her spirits were tolerable, and we had an interesting conversation on not improbable future events. I then, at her own request, left her by herself, and went into Lady Caroline's room, where I found Mrs. Maynard, who had been assisting to dress, and was then sitting in conversation with, her cousin, whose beauty shone in its full lustre.

Apprehensive of interrupting them, I turned to withdraw upon seeing them apparently engaged; but they called me back, and invited my staying a few minutes; which I did, and we talked with the same unreserve that my Emma and I had done just before. Mrs. Maynard then went down. I staid with Lady Caroline a short time after she was gone, but seeing Mr. Graham; the two young ladies, and their brother, coming up the walk, I called for Miss Broomley, and with her, went to meet them in the saloon. They were all in high spirits: Miss Lucy more so than I had ever seen her. Upon Mrs. Maynard's appearance, I left them in the great drawing-room, and went up-stairs, when finding Emma was with Lady Stanley, I sat down and wrote to this period.

* * * * *

Lady Stanley has just been with me. She has left Lady Caroline and Emma in her room, and as all the company is arrived, except those who come not till dinner, is hastened down to order breakfast to be carried in; at which my sister-bridesmaids and I are, of course, to superintend.

I believe I omitted to tell you that Mr. Slayton has collected a most excellent set of musicians, who have been playing in full concert in the saloon ever since six this morning; which greatly assists to exhilarate the spirits of the hearers.

And now I shall call upon the two devoted beauties, that I may attend them to the expecting company.

Tuesday evening.

Tea is just over and I am stolen up again for half an hour to oblige my dear, ever dear friends in Oxfordshire. The company is so numerous that I cannot suppose myself of sufficient consequence to be missed.

But to be expeditious.

I called, as I told you I would, upon Emma and Lady Caroline, wishing them to go down directly; but they kept me with them till Mrs. Maynard came up, insisting, in her humorous way, upon their instant appearance, at which we prepared to attend her; the two lovely girls both “blushing ruby red.”

I should have a pleasure, Maria, to conduct you through every hour of this day, but I cannot possibly find time for a minute account. Suffice it that we had a most elegant breakfasting, and that very soon after it was over, Mr. Slayton motioned for the carriages to be got in readiness. The general voice was with him, and they were ordered; upon which Miss Stanley and Lady Caroline arose, and went to one of the bow-windows, looking at me to follow them. I did, and saw them both so greatly affected that I was alarmed. Lady Stanley’s attentive eye caught their situation, and going up to them, led Lady Caroline, while I attended Emma into an adjoining parlour. Mrs. Maynard soon followed, and after a few minutes, we saw the dear creatures tolerably composed. Sir Charles Conway and Mr. Stanley now made their appearance; and surely never two—But, Maria, I must not; cannot; will not, be particular. My subject is beguiling, and, unchecked, will lead me to lengths immeasurable. If I go on at the rate in which I began, the day will last me a month; so various and so interesting have been the incidents. Let your imagination assist me: suppose every thing to be in readiness. Suppose us all in a bustle—a charming bustle which seems to please every one. Suppose the musicians playing in soft strains at a little distance from the house, suppose us all seated in the carriages, and at length arrived at the church-yard, which was filled with spectators, where, by the great expedition of the performers (they, however, going a much nearer road) a grand chorus saluted our ears as soon as the carriages stopped, and continued till we were within the church.

You must now, my friend, suppose the ceremony—the awful ceremony—over, and as soon as it was ended, a very harmonious set of bells, which I this moment hear at an agreeable distance, instantly raised. In short, you must fancy every thing that your ideas can furnish of the pleasing kind, applicable to such an occasion.

After the business in the church was completed—after Sir Charles Conway and Mr. Stanley were respectively in unalienable possession of two of the most charming women in the world, we returned to the carriages, and were driven back; though by a mistake of orders in the postillions who drove the first coach, we were carried a round-about road, which was treble the length of the direct

one. However the mistake proved an agreeable incident, as the weather was very inviting, and the unintended jaunt shortened the, otherwise, too long time before dinner.

When we alighted at the Manor-House, we were again entertained by a full symphony, which preceded an admirable epithalamium. It was performed without doors, and was encored; during which time the company walked in the garden near the house. When this was over (the music still continuing) the party separated; the visitors remaining in the gardens and pleasure-ground, while Lord Danvers; Sir Edward and Lady Stanley; Mr. and Mrs. Maynard; Mr. Slayton, and myself, attended the brides and bridegrooms into the picture-closet, where mutual congratulations passed from one to another, with heart-felt cordiality; and the happy mother and fathers gave their children an affecting benediction; Mr. Slayton claiming his right (which indeed he has greatly—nobly, proved) to join in the parental blessing.

Soon after this, the rest of the company arrived; they being particularly desired by Mr. Slayton to come early in the day, and we were all led into the drawing-room, where we were served with cake; chocolate; sack, and rhenish, in great profusion; in partaking of which we passed more than half an hour, and then (some casual observation being made respecting the fineness of Mr. Slayton's green, a game at bowls was proposed, which every one approving, we sallied out and amused ourselves till near dinner time very agreeably. A large number were first engaged in bowling; during which time the music was ordered to be played on the other side of the house, but upon Lord Dennington's having singled out a party who expressed a wish for a dance on one side of the green, which is very large, two of the violin-players were desired to come round, and a set of six couples entertained those who were not so volatile. I joined them for one dance—Mr. Evelyn my partner—then went and sat down in an alcove with Lady Caroline *Stanley*—no longer Pemberton; and my dear Emma, now Lady Conway. Our attention was fixed upon the lively groupe before us, and we were much pleased with the pretty *native* manners exhibited by Miss Broomley and Mr. Robert Graham, who instinctively, I believe, had formed themselves into a couple. Miss Lucy Graham is, I doubt entangled by the too conspicuous arts of Mr. Beaumont, who, as I have told you, is upon a visit to Lord Eastcourt. Mr. Beaumont has not been in the country more than a month, but during that period has, it seems, been frequently in company with the Graham family; and if there be any truth in appearances, this insidious smooth-tongued libertine—for that is his character—has wounded the peace of the innocent Lucy. What detestable wretches are these savages in human shape! They commit with impunity the worst of all thefts—the theft of the tender affections, which to borrow an idea from General Burgoyne, is generally followed by a murder of the reputation of the unhappy pilfered girl, which seldom long survives the loss of her heart; the less unfortunate—not the less criminal—of her own sex severely condemning some *innocent imprudencies* (if I *may* venture to connect terms in their *strict* sense so unconnectable) which their conscience, at the moment of their pronouncing the fatal sentence, upbraids them for giving; as it loudly whispers their own inability of keeping securely on their guard against such subtil and destroying felons, who are yet permitted to exist, while many unhappy victims suffer for crimes of not half the magnitude of theirs. But no *human* law can find a punishment for mental villany, else we should often see an oppressor change places with the culprit whom he pursues to ruin. But let us wait a few—a very few years, and we shall then behold the suffering unfortunate and the triumphant criminal each in his proper colours.

I have widely wandered, and that before I was aware of it, from the point at which I first set

out. But you must know that this letter, short as it is, has been written at half a score different periods, only I would not break the thread of my tale by fresh dates. At the end of almost every dance, for dancing has been one of our evening's amusements (telling my partner, (you will guess his name) the cause of my so often stealing away) I have given five minutes to Woodstock; and Mr. Beaumont's behaviour has so provoked me, that I could not suppress my angry sentiments.

Many a one would observe that this moralizing is very mal-apropos to the times. But I know to whom I am writing. You, Maria, will never think a serious observation out of season; especially when it falls naturally from the consideration of the sufferings arising from the often unpitied misfortunes to which the most innocent—because most unexperienced, of our sex are particularly liable; an unsuspecting heart being undoubtedly too apt to fall into the hidden snare. I am not at *this* time, my dear, as you will understand, pleading for those who are *indeed* fallen, but for such as have listened with too attentive an ear; with too much apparent pleasure; and who have given too many opportunities to the meditating destroyer to put his vile, destructive plans into execution. Of this number is, I doubt, Miss Lucy Graham. But Lady Stanley having made her observations, is determined to warn Mr. Graham (who appears to be astonishingly blind to Beaumont's manoeuvrings) of the character, which is well known in what is called the polite world, of this insidious miscreant. His sister is his exact counterpart, being as much upon the lure for victims to her power as is her brother. Mr. Slayton could not avoid inviting Lord Eastcourt, who is one of his most friendly neighbours; else we none of us wished for a second interview with this courtly beau and belle; of whom Miss Augusta Hamilton (Lord Eastcourt's sister) seems to be most heartily tired.

But I must conduct you back to the morning's dance upon the green, which conveyed an idea of true rural felicity. After that was given over, we quitted the garden, and in a short time were conducted to a most elegant dinner, consisting of three entire courses and a handsome dessert; after which, the table was covered with every kind of fruit that could be procured. In short — the entertainment was really sumptuous. When the servants were withdrawn, the music, which, during the time of dining, was heard from the saloon, ceased, and we entered into a very convivial conversation; every one seeming so pleased—so happy—that we did not think of retiring till just before tea and coffee were carried into the drawing room; after which, as I told you, I made my first elopement, and returned just as the company were moving to the ball-room.

How, Maria, shall I give you any adequate account of the festivity of this truly joyous evening! I think I will not attempt it, as I am conscious that I have no powers of expression to do justice to the hilarity of the scene. Let your fancy again be exercised, and present a large and genteel assemblage of evidently happy people, conducting themselves with ease and elegance; many of them deeply interested in the felicity of the event which occasioned the entertainment: both gentlemen and ladies, of whom there is pretty nearly an equal number, endeavouring to please by an elegant freedom of manner; not an exception, save Mr. and Miss Beaumont, and they are not of sufficient consequence to disturb any body but poor Lucy Graham.

At the end of the last dance, Lady Stanley advised our sitting down till supper (which she said would soon be ready) should be announced. Her advice was observed, and that gave me my present vacation, which I the more readily devote to my pen, as Miss Broomley (Mr. Slayton's house being completely full) is this night to share my bed; which will probably prevent my writing after we are retired; and to-morrow, when the company will be somewhat reduced, my absence will

be less allowable than at present. However I have not been away long at one period; and indeed I believe the whole time put together, would not much exceed half an hour; so very fast, as you will see by the effect of my haste, have I driven my pen. I shall not, I fear, be able to make another escape this evening; else I would assist the fancy I have desired you to exercise, by a little more particular description.

But here comes Miss Broomley. She summons me away. I must attend her delegated orders; and lest I should not have another opportunity before the post-man goes with our letters, will here subscribe the name of

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XXVIII.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Oakley Hill, Wednesday night, May 13th.

NEVER since last evening have I found leisure for one single syllable. Engagements upon engagements have demanded every moment. We have, to be sure, had a most delightful bustle ever since yesterday morning; every individual seeming to rejoice upon the occasion of the meeting. It is next to an impossibility to lead you regularly through the passing hours, therefore I will only say that the whole entertainment was conducted with the greatest propriety and pleasantness. Mr. Maynard, who was the deputed general of the day, was every where at once; and was, indeed, the life of every thing. He had always something to say to every body. No individual, under his management, had any cause to fear neglect.

The behaviour of the brides and bridegrooms to each other was exactly such as the most delicate and affectionate could wish. It charmed every observer, and was frequently mentioned with exclamations of applause. Their friends—their delighted friends—

But I really must run from the subject. It is too copious—too fascinating, for my limits.

The company which staid all night has just left us, and we again seem to be of but one family; so interested are we in each others happiness.

About ten o'clock this morning a servant arrived from Lady Davison, whom Emma has informed of all her proceedings, bringing letters of general congratulation, and a most magnificent watch for Lady Conway. The ground of its outward case is small pearls, in the middle of which is a cypher of E. C. set in diamonds. Amongst its trinkets, a miniature of the presenter, surrounded with diamonds likewise; with a vacant oval case to match it, which Lady Davison requests may be filled with the figure of Sir Charles Conway.

The letter which accompanied this elegant present, is very affectionate, but gives a poor account of the writer's health; she having had a dangerous relapse.

Lady Davison, who is said to be immensely rich, has declared her intention of making her favorite Emma her heir. Sir Charles Conway inherited a noble estate and large sums of money from his father, and two uncles; besides a legacy, about twelve months back, from a very distant relation of his mother's, said to be eighty thousand pounds; if not more; so that his fortune will be equal to even Mr. Stanley's who is looked upon to be, in possessions and reversions—

But what are riches Maria! I am ashamed that I have added the above enumeration to the account of my Emma's happiness. A competency, indeed, is one of the great blessings of life! and though immense wealth in the hands of all those of whom I have been writing, would be a blessing, perhaps to hundreds, yet in themselves—I am convinced that with a tenth of their possessions they would experience as much true happiness as with the whole of their estates.

I will therefore have done with the subject, and give you a few lines of other intelligence.

Mr. Maynard has received a budget from Town, which brings so good an account of every thing relative to the business upon which he has been into Cumberland that neither his presence, nor that of the earl will yet be necessary. The following plan is therefore agreed upon. We are to leave this place to morrow morning, and to dine at Alverston: the next day is to be spent at Hawthorn Grove; but we are to return in the evening to Alverston. On Saturday we hope to be quite snug at home and on Sunday to go to church; therefore it is probable the beginning of the week must be devoted to receiving company. The week after (before which time you will I hope be amongst us) it is intended for us to return the visits, and the Monday following to go to London, that the brides and bridegrooms may be presented to the King and Queen before the birth-day; which it is thought proper they should attend at this period.

Amongst other letters from London, Mr. Maynard has received one from Sir William Jenyns, which gratifies the resentment that even good Mr. Broomley has conceived against Lord Crumpford; who, Sir William says, is grown so notorious from the public knowledge of his villanous conduct, that he dares not stir out of his house; as upon two or three attempts to go abroad he was so violently handled by the mob, which at the instigation of old Peter, the famed hackney coachman of Piccadilly almost immediately gathered about him, that he has scarce been able to see ever since. It seems there are some proveable actions of this bad lord's which are liable to prosecution, and which Sir William Jenyns says he is taking steps to bring to full light. Mr. Broomley, who this day left Oakley Hill with the hope of seeing us again next Tuesday, entered into a consultation with the earl; Sir Edward Stanley and Mr. Maynard, upon the contents of Sir William's letter as soon as it was read. What the result was, I do not yet know.

Lady Stanley has requested Mr. Graham to give her an audience early in the morning; being determined to warn him of his Lucy's danger from that vile Beaumont.

I am more and more charmed Maria with the behaviour of the two gentlemen to their lovely partners; and likewise, with the return which *they* make to the treatment they receive. So tender; so respectful; so polite on all sides as they are, their conduct is a proper example to every one in their situation.

As to Mr. Stanley—I could not have thought—

But I am this instant summoned to attend in the drawing-room.

* * * * *

I am returned to my pen and will now tell you for what I was wanted.

Sir Edward Stanley has insisted upon presenting the female part of our happy society with new court dresses; and I was called to assist the consultation upon the fit and the unfit for the several individuals.

I will enclose you a copy of the paper of orders which now lies upon my dressing-table.

Mrs. Maynard has a magnificent taste for dress, and wears a great number of diamonds. That of both the brides is more simple; to many particulars they made objections; but she over-ruled them by showing what she called, the *necessity* of their compliance on the present occasion of their introduction to their Majesties.

The dress which Mrs. Maynard had determined upon for me—for though we were called to a consultation, she was Lady Dictatrix—was much too glaring for my approbation. With some difficulty I prevailed for an alteration.

Mr. Evelyn, Maria, is a teacher; and ought to be a teacher of humility. Would it then be excusable in any one who has a view—perhaps not *very* distant—of putting herself under his protection, to make an appearance flagrantly opposite to his precepts? I know you will join in a negative to this question; and so will my dear mother and aunt; and will coincide in this opinion—that be the fortune of a clergyman ever so high, it ought not to be employed in *disgracing* his profession. But how old fashioned should I be deemed, were I to add that it would be far better to cloth the almost-naked with what should be found superfluous, than to waste it upon vanity!!!

Hide this sentence Maria from the polite world lest, in Mrs. Kennedy's phrase, I should be hooted at for a monster.

Miss Stanley—Pshaw! Lady Conway, I mean—has insisted upon presenting me with a complete set of pearls. When she first intimated her intention, that I might make my choice of figures, I so warmly objected to receiving it (knowing how difficult it would be to keep, within due bounds, the magnificence of her temper) that she burst into tears; at which instant Sir Charles appeared, and I was obliged to submit to the joint mandate.

Mrs. Maynard had likewise fixed upon a most elegant *habillement* for Miss Broomley, in which Lady Stanley required considerable alteration, as she said Miss Broomley had not been accustomed to any thing of the kind, and she thought it would not be right to invite her young mind to a love of finery. She was, Lady Stanley observed, daughter and granddaughter to the clergy; and she could not think Mr. Broomley would approve of her being made to appear very showy.

Mrs. Maynard said Miss Broomley would now have a handsome fortune, and she did not see

why her being descended from clerical parents should prevent her being dressed with elegance.

“By no means,” Lady Stanley returned, “provided simplicity has the ascendancy. But Miss Broomley is very young; and I cannot consent to infuse a too early taste for ornament; which she will, doubtless, imbibe full soon enough.”

Lady Caroline, Emma and myself were of Lady Stanley’s opinion; and Mrs. Maynard was at length convinced of its rectitude.

One dress, which I have not yet added to the written orders, is to be of plain white silk; the petticoat to be laid in deep welts up to the top. Over it is to be worn the finest buck-muslin which can be procured; the train, very full and long, to be welted like the petticoat. And this it is hoped my Maria will not refuse to accept from the venerable Sir Edward Stanley; who, as I have said, insists upon being the provider-general of attire.

Mrs. Maynard was very desirous to have had you decked with pearls; alledging their not making a showy appearance; but I told her I could answer for it that they would be rejected. Lady Conway, however, would hear no objection to a pair of pearl roses for your shoes; they not being inconsistent, she said, with your strictest order. To these, therefore, Maria I acceded; and hope my compliance will not be thought reprehensible by Mrs. Stanhope; of whose disapprobation on that particular, I am half apprehensive.

The *gentler sex* provided for, the dress of the gentlemen came next under consideration; but it was not absolutely fixed.

Mrs. Thompson, a foster-sister of Lady Caroline’s and I believe of Mrs. Maynard’s likewise, who lives in London, is to get the orders executed.

With this account of our finery, I must, my dear girl, bid you adieu, till we arrive at Alverston.

Respectful remembrances are desired by all *our* family to the *two*, which often makes but one, in Oxfordshire. If your next does not convey intelligence of the day of your setting out for Derbyshire, it will occasion a general disappointment, as we are all impatient to have you amongst us. Lady Conway bids me to entreat your hastening your coming as much as possible; and the little Alethea requests you to accept her love. She says she *quite longs* for your arrival.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

LETTER, XXIX.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MISS LAWSON.

Woodstock, fifteenth day of fifth month.

THY letter of fourth day, my dear Charlotte, hath just reached us, and as soon as I have written a few lines in answer to thy conclusion, my aunt and I are going with it to thy mother's.

With regard to the dress intended to be provided for me, I cannot help saying—Yet no: as I hope so soon to see thee I will, at present, forbear that subject.

We returned last evening from Stanton. Of what passed there, I will likewise forbear to talk till we meet.

Patty Henderson meaneth to set out to-morrow morning for Yorkshire. My dear aunt Stanhope, whom I cannot think of leaving without its costing me a tear, giveth me leave, she sayeth, with pleasure, to attend her. With not the less pleasure, I believe, from the intimation of thy party's intention of taking dear Woodstock in their route. But what a traveller shall I be made! I expected when my aunt first gave me leave to accept the dear Emma's invitation to Alverston, to have spent the time there in a domestic party; and instead of that, I am to be carried through nearly half the Island.

I have so much to say to thee Charlotte, that I dare not begin upon any subject, lest it enticeth me beyond my leisure.

My aunt desireth her very cordial respects to *all thy family*; particularly to the benevolent mistress of Alverston Park; to whose kind care she, with sincere satisfaction, committeth her Maria. Remember me with affection to the lovely brides, and to the sprightly Alethea, to whom I am already partial. Her worthy grandfather claimeth reverence from us all.

We mean to set out to-morrow morning by break of day, and to travel post; because Patty Henderson wisheth to sleep to-morrow night at Coventry, and likewise to spend first day there. On second day morning we intend again to speed forward, and that night, to reach Derby; where I purpose to sleep with my travelling friend, and on third day morning I hope to see my truly dear Charlotte Lawson.

As we do not know the signs of the Derby Inns, we mean to put up where the mail-coach stops; therefore if it will be convenient for thee to meet me at Derby, thou wilt know where to find me; but if I neither see nor hear from thee by eleven o'clock, Patty Henderson will put me into a chaise, with some proper attendant to convey me to Alverston Park.

I shall carry with me Charlotte a whole budget full of love and best wishes to thyself and friends; particularly a large quantity of both, from worthy Doctor Griffith.

Thine in sincerity and with the truest cordiality,

MARIA LEWIS.

I write this postscript at thy mother's, who with thy aunt, sendeth tenderest remembrances. They bid me to tell thee that a letter is just arrived from thy sister; who hath resigned her *right honorable* admirer; to the great displeasure of the baroness.

LETTER, XXX.

MISS LAWSON, TO MISS MARIA LEWIS.

Alverston, Monday, evening May 18th.

THE continual round of engagements in which, since my last, I have been involved, has prevented my being able to write one line to my Maria since we returned to Alverston. A letter to my sister, is all for which I have found leisure.

Our time has been employed pretty much as we expected. Friday at Hawthorn Grove was a most enchanting day indeed. We hope to have one or two more such, before we leave the country; but Lady Conway does not mean to receive company there till her return from the meditated ramble. You, Maria, will I hope soon see this piece of fairy-land; but as my mother and our aunts are not likely to visit it at present, I will copy, for their perusal, some part of the description which Lady Conway requested me to give of it to Lady Davison, who not having been well enough to visit it since Sir Charles began his improvements, has desired a particular account of the place of her Emma's future residence, which she says she has heard much celebrated, but cannot believe the report of its being superior to Alverston Park, as that, she observes, was always esteemed to be one of the most beautiful spots in the Island. My mother and aunt can describe this last earthly paradise, and then you may draw the comparison.

I know I cannot do justice to either the house or gardens, as I have no talent for these kind of delineations: all my aim has been, and shall be, to give a faint sketch of what I think most worth notice.

The mansion of Sir Charles Conway is built of fine white freestone, forming in front a very large angular crescent with two wings, which, after running a considerable length, fall back and form two smaller half-circles; angular like the middle one; a wing, likewise, running from each; which finishes with a right angle. These extremities are composed of offices, and are so connected with the main building by means of large, light interior passages, that it is one of the most convenient, as well as beautiful, habitations I ever was in. A great recommendation to it in my opinion, is, that every room is perfectly dry; being all, even those occupied by the servants, considerably above ground: and in the vaults underneath, many of which are cellars, fires are frequently made, that the whole may be kept free from that damp so often seen upon the walls of lower apartments.

I disclaim architectivè terms, but I think the edifice is chiefly of the corinthian order. The windows are large, and many in number, and the sculpture round about them strikingly magnificent. The flight of stone steps to the front door is in five angles, over which is a covering, supported by a

balustrade, which extends so far that they are always dry. Upon this defence from rain, around which is a gilded iron net, are pots upon a rising stage, filled with hardy ever-greens, and so defended are they by the circular form of the building, it having likewise a south aspect, that they brave the greatest part of the winter. All round the house, at the bottom, urns of myrtles and various other shrubs stand quite thick in two rows; the top rows reaching the windows.

From the flight of steps in the front, is the entrance into a grand octagon saloon; in the middle of which, rises a dome to the top of the house, and appears considerably above it. After it leaves the roof, it is covered with glass and defended by a thin net-work of brass. Round the saloon is the grand stair-case, and within the dome are three galleries, one above another, supported by fluted columns; the lowest of which, are of beautiful white and brown marble. The roof of the house is flat, and on each side of the dome, but not quite so high, is a little turret, glazed round, furnished with all kinds of telescopes. They are very neat boxes, and are dedicated, the one, to day—the other, to night objects. Their outside corresponds with the dome and the rest of the building; which is finished with a turreted parapet wall.

We will now descend from the top of the house, and once more enter the saloon, which leads by eight different doors to as many different apartments and passages; besides one opposite to that at the entrance, which opens into a neat little garden, from which is a gate into a back avenue.

The house is very lofty, and, from the lowest to the highest floor, furnished with new and elegant furniture; but so numerous are the rooms, that I must not undertake to go through them regularly; I will therefore only mention a few; by which you may guess at the others.

On the right hand of the saloon, are the common dining and drawing rooms; the first furnished with light green; the other, with a pale pink armozeen corded with white, and both trimmed with white silk fringe. The great dining room is a light straw coloured sattin, the fringe silver; the chandeliers are elegant; and the side-board magnificent indeed. The great drawing room is sattin, of a light blue, with a small white sprig. Over the first plain covering, a deep festoon hangs from the top, which is trimmed with a handsome silver fringe, with small tassels at each festoon. Round the room and about the doors; windows; chimney-piece, &c. is a broad corresponding silver lace. At a little distance it looks like fringe, only it does not hang loose. The looking-glasses are extremely large, and their frames of silver filligree. The seats in the windows are broad and circular; with cushions of the same sattin as that which covers the walls; the fringe rather narrower than the lace around the room: the sofas; chairs, &c. to answer. The curtains are drawn back from the windows, on each side, in a very handsome manner. They have a second row of fringe about half a yard from the bottom. The carpet is a fine broadcloth to match the sattin; upon which are worked with white silk, in close tent-stitch, so that it will not easily wear out, bunches of snow-drops; jessamin, and lilly-of-the-valley; finished with a handsome double border. Upon the whole, I never entered a room which made a more truly elegant appearance. The chandeliers—I forgot to give them their due place—are silver, neatly wrought.

Could I spare time you should be entertained with a description of the apartments dedicated to the study of different arts and sciences; but I must reserve a minute account of these for personal conversation. However I will just mention them, and will begin with the library, which is entirely furnished with green; a colour favorable to a reader's eye. This room, in which Sir Charles usually

breakfasts, is very large, and is completely filled with books, upon all subjects, handsomely bound. In the middle, is a long table, upon which are materials for writing; and large turning stands for the great books. At the farther end of the room are two arched recesses (one on each side) which lead into two other apartments; that on the right hand, is filled with globes, and astronomical as well as optical instruments of various kinds. A fine representation of the solar system, particularly engaged my attention. Out of this room are two closets; in one of which is a camera obscura; in the other a solar microscope.

The recess on the left hand side of the library leads to what may truly be called a museum, having in it a variety of curiosities. The room is long; the windows all on one side. At the farther end are several artificial trees; such as myrtles; oranges, &c. At the back part, in the middle, is a stem of a fig-tree; which affords a stand for some large birds. Many of these trees are in blossom, and reach from the floor to the ceiling, apparently growing out of the earth; that part of the room being covered with moss; the other, with green cloth. This grove, as it may be called, is full of birds of various kinds, which are preserved with such skill that the eye can hardly be convinced they are not alive. Their position is perfectly natural, and the floor has such a spring, that one cannot walk across it without setting the whole in motion; which adds greatly to the idea of its being the production of nature. This elasticity of the boards has a particular good effect upon some birds which—being suspended by an almost invisible wire—appear in the action of flying; two or three as if pursuing butterflies, which are suspended in the same imperceptible manner. Several wasps and bees, likewise seem to be darting at the blossoms of the shrubs. What particularly struck my eye was a pair of eagles of the sun, male and female, fixed in different attitudes, upon the top branches of the fig-tree, placed just in front. They are most admirably preserved, and their eyes incomparably imitated. Just underneath them, screened by a broad orange leaf, sits a beautiful little humming bird upon her nest; her mate, still more beautiful than she (on account of the brighter colour of his head and breast) standing beside her, on a slender twig, seemingly in fear of their enormous neighbours; but the leaf is to them a large umbrella; and indeed, were they all living, these little ones would probably be objects of indifference to this King and Queen of the feathered specie. With a kind of an adoring wonder, I contemplated the striking difference between these two pairs of birds;—so much alike in their mode of existence; yet so greatly different in their size, and nature! The little ones, so timid!—so trembling! Afraid of every rustling leaf! While the royal pair seem to threaten destruction to all around them. I have passed over the rest of the birds, beautiful as they are, with some indifference; so absorbed have my ideas been by those I have described.

The bottom of the grove is occupied by hares; rabbits; spaniels; snails; caterpillars, &c. &c. In one corner is a little kitten springing at a mouse, which, I remember, very much entertained the still more kittenish Lady Catherine Villars; while Miss Letty Stanford's attention was fixed upon a young lamb, that seemed to look up for protection. At another corner, is a large rock, partly covered with moss; from whence issue, in different directions, several small streams of water, which are received at its foot, into an oval bason, lined with holland-tiles: the banks and a little way down the sides, are of green moss. Upon its surface, several small aquatic fowls, in fine preservation, are kept in motion by the falling of the water (which is let out below unseen) as well as by the living gold and silver fish which are in the bason. This has a most admirable effect, and makes the whole appear alive; in opposition to conviction. There are in the grove several curious nests of different birds; and in the middle of the ceiling, suspended by wires from above, a hawk pursuing a linnet; a horned owl in flight, with a mouse in one claw; and indeed many more things of the same kind than I can take

the least notice of; for the room is lined, and filled almost, with all kinds of curiosities, both native and foreign.

I am quite impatient to get out of the house, but cannot avoid the music-room, which is superb, and furnished with almost every instrument that I have hitherto heard named. This room is large and lofty; its ceiling is a concave and the windows arched. On one side of the wall, the story of Orpheus charming the beasts of the forest with his harp, is painted in a most masterly manner. Over the chimney piece, is a very fine Cecilia at full length; but the most beautiful painting in the room is round the lower part of the cupola. The principal figure—just over a magnificent organ—is Euterpe, the muse presiding over music, and is such a striking representation of the lovely Emma that it catches and detains every eye. I have learned that Sir Charles borrowed of Lady Davison the full length piece for which the then Miss Stanley sat to Gainsborough, for his painter to copy, when he sketched this figure; and he has most exactly caught both her face and air. Her hand and arm, so remarkable for their beauty, are unaffectedly displayed to the greatest advantage. She is seated upon an ivory throne, under a canopy held up by nymphs and cupids, receiving with inimitable grace a garland of flowers from Apollo. At a little distance, is the muse Erato, smiling upon a lovely girl, who has in her hand a small book, seemingly of poems, which Erato appears to encourage her to present to Apollo and Euterpe, with a view, as a spectator may suppose, to have the sonnets set to music. The whole painting in the dome forms one fine landscape. Over the windows are several nymphs playing on different instruments of music; near to them, and seemingly listening in admiration to the sounds below, is a company of shepherds with their sheep and lambs. Amongst which, Sir Charles Conway and Mr. Stanley are easily distinguished. The last appears all vivacity; but Sir Charles' attention seems to be directed to the nearly opposite Euterpe.

I forgot to tell you that this noble and gallant master of the magnificent structure which I am delineating, gave me an intimation that he intends to have the Cecilia over the chimney-piece, altered into a likeness of Lady Caroline Stanley; for which purpose Mrs. Maynard, who is in the secret, is to order down a full-length portrait of her cousin, that Sir Charles' painter may make the alteration in our absence.

The closing groupe of figures in the cupola, consists of several beautiful young girls forming themselves into a dance under the inspection of the Graces. The top of the concave shows a bright sky with fine white curdled clouds. At a distance, the seven other Muses are seen upon Mount Parnassus, viewing the scene described; on which Minerva, gracefully seated upon one of the fleecy clouds, appears to smile approbation.

With regard to the upper rooms—they are so numerous, and so differently elegant, that I cannot permit myself to enter upon a description of them. The second and third stories are equally convenient, and alike handsomely finished. Lady Conway's apartment is the only one I will lead you to. A sleeping-room; two dressing-rooms, and two very large light closets, compose it. The furniture is a silver corded muslin, lined with pale pink silk. Two dressing-tables, with silver boxes, &c.; two large Indian cabinets; a forte piano; a neat book-case, with sofas; stools; chairs; wardrobes; a writing table, &c. all handsome of their kind, are amongst the moveables. The carpeting, which entirely covers the floors of this suit of rooms, is particularly handsome.

We will now, Maria, leave the house, and descend to a broad fine green terrace, (beautified

by several irregular-shaped little plats of flowers) which lies close round it. This is bounded by a hard gravel walk; then another verdant one, and then a beautiful slope to a spacious bowling-green; gardens; shrubbery; wilderness; grove, &c.

It is impossible for me, my dear girl, to convey you through all these places regularly. I am not rich enough, either in time or abilities, to do them justice; therefore will only observe that they are all absolutely enchanting, and then close the scene with a view of the grove from which the whole takes its name.

O! but the park—! I had forgotten the park; and it well deserves particular notice; being, perhaps, one of the finest in the kingdom: the ground in it is very unequal, and adorned by a great many clumps of trees; avenues, &c. At some distance from the house, are several fine pieces of water. Close to the south side of the park-pale lies the great London road, and on the other side of that, a new navigable canal; which, being in frequent use, prettily diversifies the scene. Little spots, called pleasure-grounds, with either alcoves, arbours or temples in them, are in every part of the park, which is occupied by a great variety of creatures. Deer in abundance; with horses; oxen; cows; sheep, &c. are grazing all around: there is, also, vast quantities of the feathered tribe of almost all descriptions, which, by frequent intercourse, are made quite familiar. I was much pleased with the broods of two hens; one being of partridges, the other pheasants; and likewise with the young ones of a peacock; which have been particularly attended to by Mrs. Wilson (the good old housekeeper of Sir Charles Conway's father) and are rendered remarkably tame. Hares and rabbits frequently crossed our steps, and pigeons of various kinds came cooing round us, we being attended by a little girl who carried baskets of wheat; peas, &c. to allure and feed these feathered families. The pieces of water are all occupied above and below; being well stored with fish, and their surfaces covered with great quantities of different kinds of fowl; amongst which, the princely swan appears distinguished. From the north to the south side of the park, is a considerable descent; which renders the situation of the house uncommonly pleasant. Just without the pale, and somewhat eastward of the north, rises a hill of large extent, whose sides and top are covered with lofty firs; pines; larch trees, and laburnums; intermixed with flowering shrubs. This is not only a defence from the cold winds, but affords a most agreeable prospect of the beauties around, and the winding walks up to its summit, are inexpressibly charming; little benches being fixed on different parts of the ascent; and upon the top, amidst four trees, a turret glazed on every side.

Between this hill and the house, is the celebrated grove; which is chiefly composed of very flourishing hawthorns; intermixed with the blackthorn, and lauristinus; with laurels; laburnums; sweet-briars; woodbines, &c; the ever-greens placed so advantageously as to make the visible part of it appear in perpetual foliage.

There are above an hundred double rows of these trees and shrubs united; forming avenues which are some of them straight; others circular, and many of no determined shape; leading unexpected into each other. Some of these walks are broad; others, narrower: some few of fine hard gravel; but the major part of grass, so short and soft that it seems like velvet carpeting. The trees generally run up to a dozen feet; though some of them are much higher and, meeting at the top, form an arch, which, in very warm weather, affords a delightful parasol. Along the sides, are rows of flowers and fruits: lilly-of-the-valley, in great quantity, mixed with the former; and amongst the last, strawberries of every kind, in abundance.

In the center of this beautiful grove is a spacious lawn; in different parts of which, are large clumps of trees, whose branches bend downwards till they sweep the grass, which is kept short and even by some small Welch sheep that graze about at will. Round the trees, are various kinds of seats: some open; others covered; with conveniences for drinking tea; syllabubs, &c. At the entrance, on one side into this rotunda, is a building which appears like a temple, but which is, in fact, a neat little cottage, occupied by a venerable old man; his wife, and the widow of his son, with her three girls; the eldest of which is about twelve years of age; the youngest eight. The old man was a soldier in the regiment of Sir Charles Conway's father. The present employment of himself and family is to attend the feathered species: even the wild choristers of the grove are his care; Sir Charles having given particular orders that they should have all possible inticement to partake of the scattered corn. In this little cottage, is a dairy for the use of the visitors to the grove. It is supplied by three beautiful small French cows; the cream of whose milk is particularly rich. Within this enclosure, are several hillocks; consequently some little valleys; but its situation is so high in the park that there is not the least damp, nor the idea of any. At a distance, through some of the straight walks, is seen a winding river, over which are thrown several bridges; one a light Chinese; another a Gothic, &c.; through the arches of which, some of the swans are frequently seen swimming. Another of the vistas is terminated by a windmill; and one by the parish church.

The music of the birds in this place is beyond any thing I ever heard. I was quite enchanted with it, but Lady Catherine Villars, when she was there, lamented that the rookery was at such a distance that we could not hear the cawing of its sable occupiers; which, she said, would be greatly preferable to the whistling of little birds.

I will now, Maria, conduct you to the Temple of Pomona, which is situated at the upper end of one of the straight broad green walks. It is a large octagon building, ascended by above a dozen semi-circular steps. Including the door, which is sashed, it has eight windows, with niches about two yards between each. The walls on the outside are intirely covered with foliage of different kinds, from the bottom to the top. It rises in a concave, which is glazed in the same manner as that I described in the house, and like that, defended on the outside from the pecking of birds by a wire net; with the difference, of its being painted green. The inside of the Temple, even to the top of the cupola, is entirely lined with vines, of various kinds; which produce, in general, an abundance of grapes; the walls being kept of an equal, moderate warmth, by means of the Franklin stoves. There are, likewise, a great variety of lemon, lime and orange trees; several very fine pomegranates; with geraniums and myrtles, quite round, without number; so that it appears a complete arbour; for even the windows, which are very large, and in large squares, are partly covered with leaves. Just at the rise of the concave, are placed four Æolian harps, in opposite directions; which produce sweet wild notes of music.

In every one of the niches between the windows is a figure about four feet in height. The most striking one, upon a first entrance, is a Pomona, which is placed nearly opposite to the door. This figure is most beautifully painted. Her hair appears to be flowing about her shoulders without any ornament, except a small bunch of strawberries on one side. Her robe is an apple-green, with bunches of purple grapes and morella cherries; and on her sash, which is white, is painted a variety of fruits. Upon a stand, close by her, is a silver bason, with partitions, which is occasionally filled with the fruits in season. To this the figure seems to turn her hand as in invitation to the company to

partake of the treat. Next to Pomona, stands a lovely Flora. A garland of flowers adorns her hair; her robe is pale pink, with bunches of jessamine, and myrtle in blossom. Her bosom almost covered by an elegant bouquet, and in one hand she holds a basket, like that of Pomona's, filled with various flowers, which, in the same manner, she seems to present to the company. Hebe is in a third niche. *Her* offering is generally a bowl of lemonade; which she holds in a silver concave waiter. Opposite to her is Ganymedes, who presents, in like manner, a bason of negus.

The other niches are occupied by various nymphs, who usually treat the company with cakes and sweetmeats of different kinds.

One of the beautiful figures seems to be unemployed, till she is requested (by somebody who is acquainted with her powers) to oblige the visitors with some music; when, upon a hidden spring being touched, which may be done without observation, she raises a lute, held till then carelessly in her hand, and some charming notes are produced, seemingly by her skill. Just as she rests, a little bird pops from amongst some artificial branches, which every one must suppose to be real, and makes most delightful harmony: next, a robin-red-breast appears, and then a gold-finch; all whistling together for several minutes. When I first heard them, I absolutely, for a moment, thought they had been real: and at that juncture, one of the Æolian harps gave sweeter tones than common; so that altogether the very air seemed melody.

Lady Stanley, who has often seen the celebrated Cox's museum, the account of which, you and I have read with so much wonder, says that the little piece of mechanism in this temple, is equal to any one in that formerly famed collection.

A hundred beauties at Hawthorn Grove still remain to be told; but I will here close my description, and likewise my letter, after I have said that we have this day had, at Alverston Park, as many friends as could well be accommodated. I came up to my pen as soon as they were gone. Tomorrow we expect as many more. Form, upon this occasion, seems to be banished. All is conviviality and happiness.

Lady Caroline Stanley and Lady Conway just now proposed to Mr. Evelyn

* * * * *

My dear Maria's letter, dated Friday, which informs me of her intention to be at Derby, as on this evening, was brought up to me just as I had written the name of Mr. Evelyn. I am all joy upon its contents, and must go down to communicate my happiness.

Monday night, almost eleven.

It was near nine o'clock when I went with my letter into the drawing-room, where it produced expressions of, I am sure, unfeigned satisfaction. It was with difficulty that I obtained permission to come up again thus soon (as they said there was no answering your letter) till I told them that I meant to put what I *had* written, and *should* write, into the post-office at Derby, directed to Mrs. Stanhope; as it would give her early intelligence of the safe arrival, at that place, of her beloved niece; and that she would send it for the perusal of my mother and aunt; to whom, on the

same account, it would, I well knew, convey much satisfaction.

To you, therefore, my three revered friends, I now address myself, to tell you it is settled that Sir Edward and Lady Stanley; Sir Charles Conway, who, as I have said, insists upon being of the party, and myself mean to be at Derby to-morrow morning by eight o'clock, to fetch my dear Maria to breakfast: and to prepare her for so early a summons, as well as to satisfy her that her letter had been received, a servant was instantly dispatched to Derby, with a note from Lady Conway.

But for the incivility of her leaving Mrs. Henderson, we all wished for her conveyance, this night, to Alverston; from that consideration only, it was agreed to post-pone her arrival till the morning.

I wonder she did not send up a messenger as soon as she reached Derby. I shall chide her, when I see her, for the omission. For suppose her letter, by any accident, had been delayed, in what a disagreeable state of expectation must she have waited! A little chit! to depend, in such a case, upon the punctuality of the post!

But I must hasten to bed, that I may not, in the morning, over-sleep myself.

Lady Stanley commands me to give her best respects to Mrs. Stanhope, to whom she intends writing in a few days; and to thank her for the precious trust she has reposed in her; of which, she bids me to say, she hopes to exert her utmost care to be found not unworthy.

Accept, my dear friends—and convey a share to good Doctor Griffith—of my duty, love and reverence.

CHARLOTTE LAWSON.

I do not mean to put this letter into the post till I have seen Maria. You will therefore, upon its reaching Woodstock, receive a proof of her safe arrival at Derby.

LETTER, XXXI.

MISS MARIA LEWIS, TO MRS. STANHOPE.

Alverston Park, twentieth day of fifth month.

I Am now, my dear maternal aunt, safe, well and happy, thanks to the Great Preserving Power, at this beautiful and hospitable mansion.

My dear Charlotte told me the contents of the letter which she put into the Derby post-office, directed to thee; therefore, if it duly reacheth thee, thou wilt know from it, the mode of my conveyance from Derby to Alverston; as the plan, therein mentioned, was executed.

Just as the clock had stricken eight, the carriage stopped at the inn door; out of which the respectable father and mother of our dear Emma; her husband, and my Charlotte, instantly alighted.

They were shown into a parlour, down to which I was hastening to receive them, but met Charlotte on the stairs-head. The meeting, my dear aunt, was, I cannot doubt, equally joyful to her and thy Maria. We then went to the friends below, who, upon Charlotte's introduction, received me as one they had long known. I never remember to have experienced such an instant congeniality; which, had I not been previously intimate with their characters, I should have endeavoured, in some measure, to have curbed, lest the sudden partiality should have been erroneously placed; but not having there, any thing to apprehend, I checked not the impulse.

The father of Emma Conway is one of the most charming men I ever beheld. His countenance, open as day, is expressive of the utmost serenity and cheerfulness. I never saw in any face goodness of heart more conspicuous. His wife is his exact counterpart. I loved her as soon as I looked at her, and wished to have called her mother. She must have been, and indeed still is, very handsome. Our dear Emma's husband next claimed my attention. To say he is without an exception the handsomest man I ever before saw, would be poor praise. The elegance of his manners should come in before that of his person; but they must both give way to the eminent superiority of his mind. I admire him beyond expression, and think that with such a woman as he hath married, his habitation must, in all human probability, be the residence of what we mortals term true felicity.

By general desire, Patty Henderson was requested to go down, where she was received with true politeness; and the kind Lady Stanley, as she is called, thanked her in thy name, for her care of Maria Lewis.

Patty, to whom I spoke in private before my leaving her, desired me to tell thee she is delighted with these my new friends.

We arrived at the Park about half after nine, yesterday morning. I am glad it doth not rest with me to give thee a description of this beautiful place, as I should have despaired of conveying an adequate idea of either the structure or its environs. Till now, I never was in so charming a spot of earth. Yet every one telleth me that Hawthorn Grove, which it is intended I shall soon see, is still more enchanting. Charlotte sayeth that she gave some account of it in the letter which she put into the Derby-office. The probable place of *her* future residence, is, I am told, to be finished in a truly elegant style; the situation, in itself, being extremely pleasant.

As soon as the carriage stopped at Alverston, the lovely Emma Conway, and the equally lovely Caroline Stanley, were at the door; and both received me in such a manner as I cannot do justice to by relating. Such charming women as these two, were never, surely, before united in one family.

Of George Stanley, what is it possible I can say! My praise is too much exhausted to do him justice.

At Derby, I thought the *husband* of Emma Conway to be the handsomest man I ever saw. I had not then seen her *brother*; who, though not superior to the first, is, I think, his equal. With the characters of both, thou art well acquainted; and, better than I, canst determine to which to give the preference; for so exactly do their merits strike me, though in different lights, that I cannot make either scale preponderate; nor do I know which of the two married couples would soonest attract an

envious eye; so very happy doth it appear to me they are both likely to continue. But let me finish these characters with saying that my reception from George Stanley was at once familiar; respectful; polite, and singularly generous; for if I persist in being thus particular, I shall far exceed the limits of the time allotted me for my employ; which was only half an hour.

Herbert Evelyn welcomed me as the sister of his Charlotte. He is held, I perceive, in the high estimation of which he is deserving, by every one at Alverston.

The politeness of the Earl upon seeing me, did honor to his rank. It can hardly be credited that this now kind father was so lately a wretched gamester. The great change is talked of by every one acquainted with the circumstances.

But the venerable Broomley, who rather unexpectedly reached the Park last evening, excited, in a high degree, my admiration and my reverence. Thou rememberest the account which Caroline Stanley—then Pemberton—gave us, at Woodstock, of his conduct, respecting the widow of her late cousin. All that she said was in my mind, upon his appearance.

The lively little Alethea confirmeth, by her behaviour, the favorable ideas that Charlotte raised of her character, by her letters. Just before I left the company this evening, her grandfather desired her to look—up to me—my dear aunt Stanhope, was his injunction; which I should be ashamed to write, but from a motive of doing justice to his expression—for a pattern. A pattern of what! Of a silly girl; for I fear I made a very confused reply to his too great compliment; meaning, however, to turn it upon himself, and to express my thanks for his too favorable opinion; for which I said I was proud to think myself indebted to the kind partiality of my friends then present; looking with gratitude, if my eyes spoke the feelings of my heart, at Charlotte; Emma, and Caroline. Alethea said she would love me dearly, and wished I would let her call me sister; to which thou mayest believe I hesitated not, with due acknowledgments, to comply.

Harriet Maynard may be termed a fine woman. Her temper is lively; her understanding and disposition apparently good. Her husband is a complete gentleman; being genteel in his person; manly; polite, and very affable in his manners. His judgement, I observe, is much respected. Their reception of me secured to them my partiality.

The old Squire from Oakley Hill is a singular character; but, when known, not an unpleasing one. He appears to be what is often called a true English spirit—uncorrupt in his integrity; strict in his morals; and loveth, as Charlotte hath said, both to get and to spend money. He saluted me, at first, with much cordiality and now calleth me his last-found daughter.

Charlotte—my dear Charlotte—greatly enjoyeth the kind treatment I meet with at Alverston; which, as I tell her, is a great compliment to *her*: but this, though it is strictly just, she will not allow. Charlotte is, I think much improved since she left Woodstock. Indeed I never before saw her look so handsome. Her fine dark eyes have acquired additional lustre; yet without losing any of the softness for which they have been so distinguished: the colour in her cheeks, too, is still more vivid; especially when she is addressed by Herbert Evelyn; whose attachment to her, is immediately evident; though politely displayed. Charlotte's partiality for him is expressed by her blushes; which are often called up, on that subject, by the lively archness of George Stanley. The conversation at

Alverston Park, is exactly such as thou, my dear aunt, wouldst approve; topics of laughter, being kept within due bounds; while serious ones, are rendered agreeable by a cheerful manner.

Is not thy Maria surrounded by such companions as thou wouldst wish her to be always conversant with? I know, could I hear thee speak, I should receive an affirmative to my question; as thou hast ever made it thy study to blend the pleasant and the useful.

To-morrow I am to attend Alethea Broomley to her intended new habitation at Alverston, which is in the village not far from the park-pale. The reverend Anthony hath brought hither the matronly woman of the name of D'Oiley, whom Charlotte mentioned in one of her letters. I went with Alethea into the housekeeper's room, to ask how she was after her journey, and was much pleased with her appearance and behaviour. We, likewise, visited the poor Mrs. Moore, who continues weak in person, but happy in spirits.

The drawing-room hath been filled with wedding visitors both yesterday and to day. I believe we all shall be glad to have these ceremonies—if they can properly be so called—at an end; being none of us, except I am mistaken in the early-formed judgment, of a disposition to be pleased with any thing like formality.

How happy, in my opinion, is rural life, when compared with the tumults of cities or a court! Pleasure, in the common acceptation of the word, may perhaps be found, with her gaudy train, in those noisy scenes; while happiness, true happiness, will shun confusion.

But at what am I venturing! To give *my* opinion of happiness! How vain! How presumptuous! yet the subject so naturally ariseth from a contemplation of the apparent felicity around, that I can hardly suppress it; nor, without difficulty, forbear to observe how short a time it is since several, in this now happy circle, were deeply distressed! *so* deeply, that they despaired of ever again knowing, in this world, any thing like even content! How great the change they now experience! And how often, in other cases would it, upon close observation, appear that the grant of our wishes is at hand, when—so far from expecting it—we are almost ready to think all hope is over! Strange, my dear and revered friend, that we cannot better learn to trust, where only we can trust with safety!

But what a scribbling girl is thy Maria grown!

How swiftly glides my pen when addressing myself to thee, with whom so large a share of my truest affection remaineth! I must endeavour to express that exuberance of tenderness which my heart at this instant experienceth, and finish my letter.

When thou favorest me with a reply, let me know how the poor Polly Fenton proceedeth. And tell her she is thought of here. Emma Conway is very anxious for her reform; as, indeed, are all those who know her history. Happy themselves—happy beyond the power of my faint language to express—they turn their thoughts to those whom they have reason to think are otherwise; glad if it be given to them to relieve any kind of distress; particularly if the sufferers have a more than ordinary claim to their attention.

I cannot do justice to the expressions of love and respect which I am desired to convey to Woodstock; therefore will only say I have a general order to deal out kind wishes to thee; our kind friends the Lawsons, and the venerable Doctor Griffith. But those of my dear Charlotte must be particularly brought forward. The next letter is to be produced by her energetic pen; for we have agreed to write alternately; perhaps, sometimes, to unite our labours in one packet, as we intend to be diligent in giving all the circumstances of our *peregrinations*, and likewise, till they commence, all interesting domestic occurrences.

I am unwilling to finish, though I have so much exceeded the time to which I was limited.

Our Woodstock worthy friends will, I trust, accept *my* grateful respects, as well as those which my pen just now conveyed.

The Harleys likewise will, I presume to hope, favorably receive my remembrances.

But what have I to offer to my dear aunt Stanhope? What she will not refuse—the duty; gratitude, and tenderest affection of her

MARIA LEWIS.

FINIS