

THE WIFE;

OR,

CAROLINE HERBERT.

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BY THE LATE AUTHOR

OF THE

“EXEMPLARY MOTHER.”

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BECKET AND PORTER,
PALL-MALL;
BY W. BULMER AND CO. CLEVELAND-ROW.
1813.

THE WIFE, &c.

LETTER I.

To Miss Herbert.

Bath,—————

YOU will be surprised, my dear Lucia, to receive a letter from me, dated Bath. Amongst the number of vagaries, (may I be permitted so to call them?) with which my good aunt has been lately possessed, this last has afforded me the greatest pleasure. She is one of the most whimsical of human beings, and it would be shocking indeed if some of her whims were not agreeable. How could my dear uncle entrust me to her guardianship?—But he, poor soul! was always under her direction.—He was never out of leading strings. I wonder she suffered him to take a trip to the other world; but her sublunary views were answered: witness the fine estate he bequeathed her, to which my ladyship has one day or other an undoubted right.

Since our arrival, nothing has been thought of but a proper adjustment of our lodgings to receive company. To rush from one extreme into another is the common failing of humourists. This strange being, this fantastic relative of mine, who lately could not bear a gleam of sunshine to penetrate into her apartment, now glows in the flaming reflection of scarlet furniture. To display the ornaments of her mind, she has been furnishing a library, though, to fill up vacancies, many of her authors are—neatly carved in wood! She, whose erudition never extended beyond a book of domestic cookery or some modern novel, now claims an external acquaintance, at least, with philosophers, historians, and poets. Well! defend me from the vanity of apparent wisdom, which will only serve to betray my own *folly*! Yet I too, perhaps, in a way very different from my aunt, am too fond of outward show. But men, who are charmed with a pleasing outside, do not expect much decoration within; while she, who only *affects* mental improvements, will be despised for her deficiencies.

My next letter perhaps will give you some account of my public amusements. My good aunt cannot yet exhibit her finery to the world;—but I assure you it has been drawn forth from her chest, examined, and re-examined, and new modelled. She has captivating charms to those who are votaries of Plutus, rather than of Cupid. Eighteen hundred pounds a year is a transporting sound to a young spendthrift, who has long heard nothing but the vociferation of duns. She might be assured of his care for the preservation of her life. I am afraid poor BEAUTY would find no modern Paris to decide the prize in her favour, if WEALTH came in competition. As to WISDOM, she is now a less formidable opponent than at the time of that important contest.

I must bid you adieu! my dear, as my aunt requires my attendance to an auction. I shall write as frequently as possible, without waiting for your regular answers, yet I earnestly wish for a letter from you. Mine will now be a busy life; may yours, my Lucy, be a happy one! and may you always continue to love

Your ever affectionate

LETTER II.

To Miss Herbert.

WELL! child, I have made my appearance in the streets, and in the Rooms.
I have been admired by

“The grave and the gay
The clown and the beau,”

envied by the young, and pitied by the ancient of my own sex. Think, my Lucy, what a series of delights Bath has afforded to one, who for several months had been entirely immured in a sick chamber. Before I appeared, Miss Somerton was the universal toast, but my radiance has thrown a shade on her lustre. Poor girl! I really pity her, and yet I cannot readily forego a single glance of admiration.

You will wish to know the characters of some of my *particular* admirers. You may see a thousand such buzzing insignificant beings in every place of public resort: Lord Monmouth is the most distinguished for birth and fortune, but in merit he has no pre-eminence. As to my good aunt, she plays away her precious moments at whist, and is as happy with a new party at cards, as her niece with a new admirer, or a good partner at a ball.

I believe I must give you a description of my first appearance. I had heard of Miss Somerton's conquests; I had seen her, and my little heart fluttered and exalted when I compared my own charms with hers in my looking glass, (the mirror of vanity, perhaps you'll say); so I resolved to burst forth in an effulgence of brightness. I made an elegant and resplendent appearance. I really was a very striking figure.—I paraded before a large glass several times. At last, just as I was stepping into the coach, a fit of humility seized me: surely I shall not become a foil to this Miss Somerton, thought I; and I stood in suspense some minutes whether to advance or retreat. Whilst this struggle passed in my mind, I was summoned down to my aunt's apartment, where an intimate of hers, with a beau son, and belle daughter, were equipped for the Rooms, and called upon me to make one of the party. A few well-timed compliments from the young man, raised my drooping spirits. The spark of vanity rekindled. I gave my hand to the flatterer, and my heart danced merrily to the sweet tune of adulation.

On entering the Rooms we found a numerous, splendid company, and I observed with a palpitation of delight, that my appearance excited a general buzz of admiration. Miss Somerton, who was surrounded by a gay circle, and addressed with all the unmeaning phrases of love's vocabulary, had the mortification of seeing herself forsaken by every admirer, and observed the homage paid to novelty in the person of Clara Woodford: for, my dear, vain as you may think me, I really believe novelty has more attractions than mere beauty. Pleased as I was with the incense, I was not particularly charmed with the person of any of my worshippers. To Lord Monmouth, as the most considerable in rank, I paid most attention. I felt an ill-natured pleasure in tracing the distress of Miss Somerton's heart in her countenance. She affected an indifference which

betrayed her emotions. I joined for a time in the dance, and when I left the set, Lord Monmouth quitted Miss Somerton to join my party. She pretended to be oppressed with excessive heat, and placed herself in a distant corner. O, my dear, what envious, deceitful creatures we are! Miss Somerton's head involuntarily turned towards us; then with a malicious titter, she whispered a young lady who sat beside her, lifting up her eyes and hands as if in amazement at my behaviour. O, my dear Lucy, that it required prodigious strength of mind to support such an exaltation without giddiness,—my brain was light—it turned round—my tongue was uncommonly voluble, and my eyes, I believe, sparkled with added lustre. Lord Monmouth and the other beaux addressed me with every complimentary expression which the language of flattery could furnish. I thought myself a superior being, and am yet scarcely reconciled to the common occurrences of life: however, my Lucy, though surrounded by admirers, and elated with triumphs, my friendship for you is ever lively. What can be the reason of your silence? I am very anxious to know the state of your family. Is your brother married to Miss Berkeley? I am half angry, but more apprehensive. My heart is deeply interested in every circumstance relative to you, and I am ever

most tenderly yours,

CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER III.

To Miss Berkeley.

COULD I ever have believed that I should have taken up my pen with unwillingness to address the dearest, and most excellent of her sex? Alas! It is in an agony of distress that I write. I must renounce you; I must resign the hopes nearest my heart. You never, never can be mine. To save my father, I sacrifice that fortune which I vainly wished to share with you. Alas! I must renounce the beloved of my soul!

The generosity of his spirit, and some taste for expense have involved him in difficulties from which it is in my power to extricate him. Whilst I enjoy the glorious privilege of paying the debt of filial gratitude, my heart is rent by its own, and, (may I not say likewise?) with your anguish. Yes, my amiable Caroline, (permit me once more, and for the *last* time to call you *mine!*) It is not vanity, but a perfect knowledge of your sentiments, that influences me to believe you will participate in the grief which overwhelms me.—You would not have promised your hand to a man to whom you had not given your heart.—Continue to bless me with your esteem, and pity me in the painful triumph of duty over love. Alas! we must not meet till I am more resigned to my fate—till I can cease to love you with that inexpressible tenderness of affection, which now actuates the heart of

Your most devoted

CHARLES HERBERT.

LETTER IV.

To Miss Woodford.

BY your accusations of me, my dear friend, for my continued silence, I find you are ignorant of the misfortunes of our family. Grief, shame, and filial duty, prevented me from disclosing the sad secret. But it can no longer be concealed.—Alas! it is too well known, and I owe to your tender solicitude every particular of our unhappy story.

My father's turn for *pleasure* (a term much too mild for irregularities which reason and religion condemn), involved him in the greatest difficulties. To relieve himself from them, he hazarded at the gaming table the shattered remains of his fortune. He lost *more* than all. He was soon after arrested for some just debts, and carried to a spunging house.—I was then on a visit in Kent—My brother was also from home, yet not at such a distance but that he received early intelligence of the disastrous event. Judge of his affliction! He flew to the place of my father's confinement. O what a spectacle! My poor father, weakened by repeated excesses, had been unable to bear the shock with tolerable fortitude—He sunk under it—Even his senses were affected.—Tears and exclamations somewhat relieved his oppressed heart. My brother observing the perturbation of his mind, intreated him to compose himself, and promised to contrive a means for his deliverance.—The unhappy parent only shook his head, and gave himself up to fruitless lamentations on his folly. Fatigued, however, by his own exertions, sleep at length, insensibly weighed down his weary eye-lids.

During this desirable forgetfulness, my brother revolved in his mind what resolution it became him to take. Every thing was adjusted for his marriage with Miss Berkeley:—He felt as a lover, but he still more severely suffered as a son. By the sale of the estate, bequeathed to him by his grandmother, which was to be settled on the intended Mrs. Herbert, he knew he could release the wretched prisoner, whose numerous debts required no smaller sacrifice for his discharge. Alas! *I* have nothing to offer—my small fortune, with my brother's expected patrimony—are all lost in the general wreck. My father wanted immediate succour. No remedy presented itself but an application to our relation, Mr. Millar. That gentleman's ample fortune would permit him to spare a more considerable sum without any security for repayment; but my brother was as little disposed to solicit, as the other to grant such a favour. He resigned the hope of obtaining Miss Berkeley's hand; but, gracious heaven! how severe was the trial!

My father awaked somewhat refreshed, and his spirits less agitated. My brother, with a tender embrace, intreated him to be comforted, told him he believed he had contrived the means for his release; but if his expectation failed him in this attempt, he would not sleep till he had by some mode or other, procured his enlargement. The effect this assurance produced on my father, was a revival of all those generous sentiments which had so long lain dormant in his breast; he aggravated his own errors, and when he considered that his wretched situation might be injurious to his son's happiness, he beat his bosom in self-upbraiding anguish.

In the mean time, the servants having heard of my father's arrest hastened to communicate it to me. I can only say, my grief was equal to my brother's. I returned

immediately to town, and hastened to this wretched parent. What contrition and despair were visible in his countenance! I have before confessed to you that I have sometimes, and perhaps too warmly, blamed his extravagance: my brother has thought my interference improper, and my solicitude severe. I acknowledge my fault, and I assure you as soon as I heard of his imprisonment, tender commiseration, sympathizing affection, took entire possession of my soul. Good God! to see him pale,—emaciated—weeping,—to hear him *condemn himself*,—almost *deify my brother*, and supplicate forgiveness from us both, who could feel any other emotions than those of the tenderest commiseration?—I received your letter at this time. You desired an immediate answer. But could I attend to your request when my mind was all confusion? My father's hurry of spirits brought on a fever which has reduced him so low, that his recovery is doubtful.

* * * * *

God be praised! he is somewhat better this morning. My brother's fortitude is amazing: he has acquainted Miss Berkeley with his resolution: he has given up his fond hopes, and protests he will not involve her in his distress.

I will write again as soon as possible, for I know you will take an interest in our wretchedness, both from your natural sensibility, and from your sincere attachment to

Your affectionate and
unhappy Friend,
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER V.

To Miss Woodford.

WHAT scenes have I to relate! My brother has actually treated with Mr. Millar about the sale of his estate, and this very evening they agreed to meet to settle preliminaries.

With unshaken fortitude has he submitted to the severity of his fate. I condoled with him on the dreadful necessity—I applauded his greatness of mind.

“My Lucia,” said he, “I only perform my duty. I pursue the dictates of filial love, and I rely on Providence to support me under distress, or to relieve me from it. I suffer inexpressible pangs, not only for my own disappointment of the most delightful expectations, but for the distress which I fear I have occasioned in the breast of the most excellent of women: yet religion, while it enables her to sympathise with me, will also inculcate on my heart the lesson of resignation.”

Just as he had pronounced these words, the door opened, and two ladies rushed in. They were Mrs. and Miss Berkeley. The latter eagerly gazed on my brother for some moments, then bursting into tears, “O! Mr. Herbert!” said she, “could you determine to abandon me for ever? Or rather, did you harbour a fear that I could forsake you?”

My brother’s eyes were fixed on the ground, his cheeks, which had been crimsoned with joy on her entrance, were now overspread with paleness; and it was some time before the emotions struggling in his breast would allow him to find utterance for his feelings. At last, with unusual agitation, he exclaimed, “O my Caroline, why did you visit me at such a crisis? I am the willing victim of filial duty; but your presence will unfit me for the sacrifice. It recalls the idea of the delights I must forego; of the happiness I had promised myself in your arms. But it must not be; honour and affection forbid the thought. Bless with your love some other”—

He could proceed no farther; but threw himself into a chair in breathless grief. Mrs. Berkeley was extremely affected; “I have long considered you, Sir,” said she, “as my son; have you in any instance forfeited my good opinion; and shall I lose the happiness of such an addition to my family, because you have lessened your fortune, by improving your virtue? I thank Heaven our circumstances do not require such a sacrifice. How could you apprehend, my dear Sir, you should lose my daughter by saving your father? Know us better, sir: Caroline is yours: I join your hands. If we loved you before this exalted conduct, we now reverence and esteem you more than we can express.”

“And who,” exclaimed Miss Berkeley, “would not willingly resign wealth, to obtain a satisfaction which its accumulation cannot bestow? Talk not, dear Mr. Herbert, of an inevitable separation. Your father’s debts are discharged. My heart has long been your’s. I consider myself as affianced to you by solemn promises. Have you not then a right to share my fortune? And how can a portion of it be better employed, than in restoring the peace of such a family, of which I consider myself as a part? I glory in my choice; and my mother’s approbation sanctifies it.”

Then turning to me, she added, “I beg your pardon, my dear Lucia, if I have seemed to neglect you. I know the whole of your sad story. Think you we will permit our sister to suffer from deficiencies, it is in our power to supply?”

“Come,” said Mrs. Berkeley, “come, my Lucy, and join with us in persuading your brother to be just to himself, and to make us all happy.”

I was too much affected to answer otherwise, than by tears. My brother gazed on Miss Berkeley, with looks, which shewed his purpose was suspended. Perceiving his irresolution, and that it depended on him to pronounce the happiness or misery of both—“Can you hesitate, my dear brother,” said I, “when Miss Berkeley permits you to make her happy?”

His cheeks glowed with the warmth of his feelings. “O,” cried he at last, “I am so circumstanced, that I am fearful the gratification of my love, would be the forfeiture of her esteem.”—“No,” interrupted she, “on the contrary, my esteem would be increased, by the correspondence of our sentiments. I should then have it in my power to say, had I been in the same distress, Mr. Herbert would have considered, that those whose hearts are in union, can have no separate interests.”

My brother could resist no longer. In an extacy of tender emotion, he caught her willing hand, and exclaimed, “Most amiable of women! when I examine my own heart, these pleas are unanswerable. O, my Caroline! words cannot describe my sensations!—My mother too,”—turning to Mrs. Berkeley, who affectionately embraced him. “Ah, how much am I indebted to both!”

My tears spoke my gratitude. Mrs. Berkeley hung over the happy lovers, and blessed them. I was all transport.—It was judged prudent that I should prepare my father for this unexpected change. I did so with all the caution in my power, yet the joyful surprise overcame him, and he fainted in my arms. The meeting between him and my brother, was almost insupportably affecting, and when, at my father’s desire, he was introduced to Mrs. and Miss Berkeley, his acknowledgements were too self-abasing for their generosity.

As to myself, my debt of gratitude is immense—Miss Berkeley insists on presenting me with £3000. on the day of her marriage. She saw me struggling for utterance. My eyes were more eloquent than my lips. “Why,” resumed she, taking my hand, “why, my Lucy, this agitation? Are we not all one family? Or, perhaps,” continued she, with a smile, “you think I assume a right of disposal, which does not now belong to me. But your brother and I are actuated by one mind.—Look not grave, my beloved sister, nor put on this face of obligation.—You would have acted thus, had I been in your place. Not a word more on the subject.” My dear, dear sister! was all I could say: but ah! what do I *feel!*

From this delightful re-union, my father declares, he dates his returning health. I cannot say his looks are altered for the better, but he is in good spirits, and tells us, he shall be perfectly well when my brother’s happiness is completed. The ceremony is to be performed next week. I shall have no time to write, till that is over.

How does your aunt? what is your present situation? have you yet had any regular attacks upon your heart, or is it all general incense offered to your vanity? write as soon, and as often as possible.

I am, my Clara,
your’s most affectionately,
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER VI.

To Miss Herbert.

INDEED, my dear, I do most sincerely share your pains and pleasures. I admire and reverence your brother. I am charmed with Miss Berkeley, and as to Mrs. Berkeley, she is the paragon of old ladies and of mothers—passive obedience, and non-resistance to such a parent, must be the very acmè of a child's ambition. I most cordially rejoice at the happy conclusion of this threatening affair. May every scene of these lovers' future lives open to them new prospects of happiness, as extensive as their virtues!

I am still excessively admired and caressed; but as to particular devoirs, you are too *particular*, child, in your enquiries. "'Tis time enough yet, 'Tis time enough yet."

Let me know every circumstance about the wedding. These excellent people must enjoy life. I suppose they will be perfect patterns of every connubial virtue, such as we shall gaze at till our eyes ache, and our hearts despond. Pardon me, Lucy, for including you—you are a very good young woman; the aching eye, the desponding heart, will therefore be the sole property of

your giddy, but truly affectionate,
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER VII.

To Miss Woodford.

MY DEAR CLARA,

I HAVE received your friendly congratulations. My brother and Miss Berkeley were on Wednesday last united in indissoluble bonds. A day, which imparted happiness to all around them. Mrs. Berkeley's joy was pure and unmixed, but my father's was blended with an humiliating remembrance. He blessed the amiable pair with the utmost tenderness; he gazed upon them till his eyes betrayed the emotions of his heart. Every day since that happy one, his looks have visibly altered for the worse; and this morning, when we went into his chamber to pay our duty to him, we found him in bed. My brother flew to him, and inquired how he felt, with eagerness. My father could not return him an immediate answer; but he gave him a strenuous embrace.

Soon after, in tremulous accents, he said, "My child, my preserver! your guilty father dies a victim to his own vices, contrasted with the virtues of his son. My heart is broken!—Nothing, but the desire of securing your immediate happiness, could have animated me to support the appearance of health and cheerfulness. That desire is accomplished, and I submit without a murmur, to the avenging hand of a just Providence. A few days, my son, a very few days, will release me from my present sufferings, but consign me, alas! I fear to future misery."

Here he clasped his hands in agony. My brother, and sister, and myself, threw ourselves on our knees beside him, in speechless sorrow.—After a melancholy pause, my dear father continued—"Do not grieve for me, my children; for me, whose faulty conduct would have destroyed your temporal happiness, had not this excellent woman saved us. With what regret do I look back on a life of dissipation! Alas! alas! had I improved time, I should have enjoyed eternity. I do, I own I do, dread the pangs of dissolution, but these will be of short duration, compared with those I am condemned to suffer.—Never-ceasing misery must be the portion of the unworthy husband—the cruel father!"

"Forbear, dear sir," interrupted my brother; "you wound us deeply, by this severe retrospect of your actions. Who has lived free from errors? You have seen, condemned, and determined in future, to avoid a repetition of yours. Spare us, my father, oh! spare yourself this painful recrimination. You have been the means, not of destroying, but of hastening our happiness, and will you, by indulging despondency, be the occasion of our misery?"

He was proceeding with a tender anxiety, when we perceived that my father had fainted. His servant entering, assisted us in recovering him, and with tears, told us, that his master had several times been very ill, but would not permit him to mention these attacks, lest the apprehensions of his approaching death should occasion a delay of my brother's marriage. O let us hope, that so affectionate a heart must be sincerely and acceptably penitent!

It was some time before my poor father revived, and when he did, he desired us to leave him, that he might, if possible, compose himself to sleep.

Such, my dear, is our present state. How dreadful a reverse! I must lay down my pen—O, may I resume it with a pleasing hope.

* * * *

Alas! My Clara, we bid adieu to hope! my father sent for us all to his chamber again, last night, and we found him much weaker than before. “My dear son,” said he, “I am going very fast. I dread to part from you all, but my greatest fear is,—that we shall never meet again. How differently do the pleasures of this world appear, when reviewed on a death bed, from that alluring representation which we form of them in the hour of health.—O, that I had always beheld them in their true light. If even venial transgressions are alarming, because destructive of the purposes of life, how dreadful is it to reflect on the commission of heinous offences! how many actions, which I ranked amongst my virtues, appear on a death-bed, in all the dark deformity of vice!—And, ah! how hideous every error!—O, take heed to preserve that delightful consciousness, which only can secure you “peace at the last.” But you, my children, want not these admonitions. Your past lives are the best lesson for your future improvement.—Yet—do not presume on your own strength, lest presumption prove your ruin.—*Trust in your Maker and Redeemer!—May GOD preserve you!*—I grow faint—Adieu! my beloved children.”—He then sunk down in his bed, faint and speechless.

* * * *

Our grief is inexpressible. My amiable sister endears herself still more to us, by her sensibility on this occasion. My brother and she, sit on one side of the bed; Mrs. Berkeley and I, take our places on the other. My poor father lies dozing almost continually.—He sometimes starts from his sleep—looks on us all—moves his lips—and then lifts his eyes to heaven.

Adieu! my dear. I can write no more at present.

* * * *

O! Miss Woodford! my dear father has breathed his last!—After two days and nights continual watchings and anxiety, during which he remained dozing or speechless, he started from his sleep, and caught hold of poor old Stanley, his servant, who sate bathed in tears, on a chair by his bed side.—He gazed wildly on us all for some moments.—At length, with tolerable composure, he exclaimed—“Farewell! my dear children.—Be religious, and you must be—happy.” He then fell back on his pillow, and expired immediately.

My tears will not permit me to write more.

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I will endeavour to conclude my letter. My brother and sister, though deeply affected, bear their loss like Christians. My dear father’s remains were conveyed yesterday to their last awful receptacle.—Merciful GOD! grant that his errors may be forgiven, and his penitence accepted!

We shall very soon leave London. Mrs. Berkeley, who never enjoyed her health in town, finds it very much injured by the close confinement and anxiety she has lately suffered, and thinks it necessary to go into the country as soon as possible. My brother and sister will accompany her, and she insists on my making her house my home, till my brother can purchase one, for I believe he intends to be in town only a month or two in the winter. He will be a father to me. Ah! with whom can I be so happy, as with him and my

sister? We are united by the strictest bonds of friendship. We mingle our tears, and enjoy a sadly-pleasing sympathy of sorrow. The same motives of consolation raise us above the afflictions of mortality. My sister, like a guardian angel, teaches us acquiescence in the will of heaven, and

“Truths divine come mended from
her tongue.”

Her religion is perfectly rational; entirely free from enthusiasm and bigotry. It dictates an universal benevolence.

I hope to have a letter from you, as soon as we get into Hampshire, and let me, among the blessings still preserved to me, continue to enjoy that friendship with which you have hitherto favoured

Your sincerely affectionate,
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER VIII.

To Miss Herbert.

WHAT has your amiable family suffered! I cannot express the anguish I felt on reading your letter.—At such a time too—so melancholy a gloom overclouding such delightful prospects!—dreadful indeed! yet the trial calls you to the exercise of superior virtues: and your own reflections will afford you the sweetest consolation. You are most sublime mortals. I tremble at my own reptile littleness, when I contemplate your eagle flights, yet I do not find my power over hearts at all in the wane. The adorable Clara Woodford, is the universal toast. I lead the dance—I direct the music—I am the soul of every diversion. But I am afraid I could not support misfortune with your fortitude, nor properly fill the part so admirably sustained by Mrs. Herbert. You have been called forth to great occasions. Tell me, how these exalted beings act in the common occurrences of life? Can they descend to domestic concerns? My admiration and my curiosity are both awake, and you know the natural impatience of

your affectionate and truly
sympathising,

CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER IX.

To Miss Woodford.

THOUGH in the midst of the amusements of the gay fashionable world, you assure me you wait with impatience for a letter. Can a description of the calm scenes of domestic life, a picture of unfashionable, connubial happiness, please so universally-admired a toast.—Yes, my dear Miss Woodford, you have too much good sense to be *infatuated* with the syren song of flattery, though for a while, you are rather lulled by its influence.

Do not think me guilty of affectation nor envy, when I tell you that I prefer the society of this excellent family, to all your boasted pleasures; and yet, my dear, I can easily account for your transient elation of heart, on such extensive triumphs. But I pity the victim of your charms, poor Miss Somerton, and think it possible (do not be displeased, my Clara!) that a similar fate may soon be your's. In a place where there is such a quick succession of new faces, even superior beauty may be deserted. Indeed your own observation dictated by *some* share of humility, (unless you meant it in general, and not to extend to particulars,) will, I hope, prepare you for the natural consequence of sudden and vehement admiration. The hearts of these modern gallants, are too constantly devoted to self-complacence, to be long capable of other attachments. But I will say no more on this subject, lest you should suspect my observations to be rather the result of envy, than of friendship.

My brother and sister are the most rationally-happy couple, I ever knew. Every day brings with it an increase of tenderness; yet this, so far from lessening their attention to religious duties, serves as an additional motive to invigorate their performance of them, as the only lasting basis on which to perpetuate each other's esteem. I did not believe it possible to lead a life of perfect innocence, to preserve an uniform cheerfulness, till I observed my sister's every action. Even my brother, I doubt, must yield to her in sanctity of sentiment. Every action of her life, may be considered as an address to God. I never before beheld such sweetness of disposition, as is displayed in her behaviour. She blends Christian fortitude, with more than maternal tenderness of heart. Meekness and charity, are the inmates of her gentle breast. She understands and practises every domestic duty.

With what exquisite tenderness does she sooth the infirmities of age! Every filial attention, every benevolent office, is discharged with an alacrity that supplies her with health and spirits. What would I give to possess half her virtues! I believe I shall be the maiden aunt of the family, for I should not be satisfied with a less degree of happiness that these good people enjoy, and yet I ought to expect less, as I possess such an inferior degree of merit. But so it is; however this is to be considered, that I have not seen the man for whose sake I would wish to exchange the name of

your affectionate
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER X.

To Miss Herbert.

NEVER was there a truer prophet! You are quite a Cassandra, my dear, and gained as little belief till your prophecy was verified. My reign lasted but five weeks, six hours, and fifty minutes, and then a usurper assumed the government, and I was deposed. I was shocked at this revolution. High treason deserves to be punished with the loss of these rebels' heads, but the misfortune is, these creatures have no heads to lose. You perhaps suspect their having no hearts. We can only judge of causes from effects, and the latter are so pleasing in the self-consequence and worldly importance they give us, that one is unwilling to be deceived as to the former. But I must be more serious, for the matter I am entering upon requires me to be so.

I have a lover, and such a lover as will excite your envy in the superlative degree: I judge you by the comparative. If you call this an insinuation, I plead guilty.—Now, for the lover. I imagine then a lover, with all the youth of Ganymede, the liveliness and agility of Mercury, the wit and grace of Apollo, the courage, without the impetuosity, of Achilles, the beauty, without the effeminacy, of Paris, (I believe this is what the critics call an anti-climax, for I should have began with heroes, and then ascended to the deities, but no matter,) well then, you must imagine all these, and you will have an idea of—a perfect contrast to my lover. O! child, that I could borrow a little of the Promethean art, and breathe somewhat of soul into many unanimated forms that occupy a space in these regions of pleasure. As to my swain, in serious truth, he shines with all the resplendent advantages of golden lustre. He is an eminent merchant, who has accumulated the sum of fifty thousand pounds. Is not this a capital recommendation? To my aunt, I assure you, it is, for it seems to absorb every disqualifying circumstance. She considers only

What pleasures will abound
When I've got £50,000!

The line is not harmonious, but the subject matter she thinks most delightful music. Whereas I think less of what abounds, than of what is deficient. And O! my dear, here are so many articles, that I know not where to make an imprimis.—His features are distorted, his person is awkward and ungenteel, his manners are unpolished, and his mind is unprincipled: yet one item I must add, that he has no vice, inconsistent with a passion for money. Charming ingredients these for a husband! Even my vanity suggests to me that my fortune has made a deeper impression than my person or merit, on his heart; and that vanity is a powerful enemy to his address. What! to have the inanimate preferred to the animate! No, my dear, I will bear no such rival. The man is desirous of cultivating no other qualities in me than prudence and oeconomy, and these are scions which he must engraft from his own tree, if he would reap the fruits. To say the truth, I do not think the stock will bear them; it will still be a wilding.

Mr. Selden saw me on a visit. His looks, it is certain, betrayed some marks of discomposure, but he very carefully made enquiries whether the “goddess had aught to

give” before he paid his adorations. On the information of my fortune he offered the incense of flattery; but that he worshipped the golden idol was very evident to my distinguishing faculties. He waited on my aunt, made his proposals in form, was accepted and introduced to Miss, that she might give her passive voice. The reptile would not take a denial. He attributed to modesty, the effects of dislike, and he admired me truly, for what he misinterpreted in his favour. What a sad thing it is not to have one’s negative accepted!

My aunt is so much pleased with Mr. Selden, that she threatens me with the loss of her affection, unless I accept him for an husband. I protest she has my consent for her own marriage with him, without any conditions; and to whisper a hint in your ear, I have some thoughts of intreating Mr. Herbert to become my guardian, as Mr. Bennet, who married my cousin, is not enough a man to my taste for this charge.

I will soon acquaint you whether my aunt’s perseverance in the affair, renders it necessary for my peace to take this step. If it be, exert your influence over your brother, and you will most highly oblige

your sincerely affectionate
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XI.

To Charles Herbert, Esq.

THE first intelligence that greeted me on my arrival in England, was that of your nuptials. I was not surprised, Charles—I thought what all your preachments would end in. What a deal of time and pains have I thrown away upon you.—You were a tolerably idle boy at school. I had hopes of you.—At college you were somewhat of an amphibious animal: a relish for the pleasures of life was blended with a fear of its excesses. The documents of a sage father, and the lessons of a prudish mother, meeting with a disproportionate share of natural gravity, confined you within limits which you would in no wise pass. Poor Herbert! are you become indeed the married man? And how sit your chains upon you, Charles? Do you not wish that you had profited by my instructions? You have never read Lord Chesterfield's advice, if you married to live soberly. An adept in his system is bound by neither moral nor religious laws, but is a freethinker in opinion, and a libertine in principle and practice.

Will you let me know your real state? Are you happily coupled (Gods! can it be possible?) or miserably yoked? I have a regard for you, Charles—a long acquaintance—your attachment to me—your well meant, though hum-drum lectures, dispose me to feel a kind of tender pity for your weaknesses, and to be as much as ever your's

WILTON.

LETTER XII.

To Lord Wilton.

PLEASURE and pain were blended in my emotions on perusing your Lordship's letter. We have passed many chearful hours together. Each has endeavoured to convince the other. Each has failed. Why can I not congratulate you on the same circumstance, which is the source of my joy? I have been a truant from school, but never, never will I be a renegade from matrimony.

I wish, most devoutly wish, that I had been a more successful advocate with you in the cause of true happiness. Can you be such a sceptic as to doubt my felicity in my inviolable attachment to the most excellent of human beings? I have been chearful, I have been many times lively, but never was I perfectly happy till my Caroline's heart and hand became indissolubly mine.

You talk of chains. Ah! my Lord, it is the licentious mind that forges for itself the fetters of slavery.—My Caroline is the chosen of my soul. To oblige her, to pursue her inclination, is to walk in the path traced by the hand of providence. O, Lord Wilton! I had taken my last farewell of this incomparable woman. I had resigned my fortune to save a distressed father. I could not support the thought of my Caroline's being so nearly allied to poverty and misery. She released me from prison, she gave liberty to my father, and, oh! extatic condescension, she gave me, herself. Since my affliction on the death of that dear parent, I have not known a care. My Caroline is the promoter, and partaker of all my joys. She refines, she ennobles every gratification.

We are at present with Mrs. Berkeley, the worthy mother of the best of women. My sister accompanied us down, and will live with us. Their days flow on in an uninterrupted course of benevolent offices. Can you form any idea of our bliss? It is not in the power of words to delineate a perfect picture of the happiness of

your Lordship's

sincerely affectionate

CHARLES HERBERT.

LETTER XIII.

To Charles Herbert, Esq.

“If thou be’st he, but ah! how fall’n,
 how changed
 From him” who in our happy childish
 days
 Was prompt in idleness.

YOUR letter, Herbert, resounding the praises of matrimony and Caroline, and Caroline and matrimony, was so much in alt, that upon my soul I could not compass it.—Not a note in unison with my feelings.—I read a little one day, laid aside the letter—took it again, another—it was then too near bed time, and operated as a soporific—in about a week I got to the end, but it never will bear a revisal.—Sure you have found with Nat. Lee, that

“There’s a pleasure in being mad
 Which none but madmen know.”

I have no idea, I *can* have no idea of your sublimities. You soar above the clouds—but at present the novelty of your state attracts you. The recurrence of domestic concerns will act with a repulsive force. You fly temptation however I find—are shut up in the country. When will you emerge? I shall really be glad to meet you in town, and to see the spell broken which confines you within the matrimonial circle.

I am ever your’s,
 WILTON.

LETTER XIV.

To Miss Herbert.

“HAPPY, happy, happy pair!” I did not think, my dear, that my consent would have been followed so soon by the parties’ approbation. I made my repulse in the most explicit terms. It was impossible to be mistaken. The man took it in dudgeon. He actually threatened revenge, and in the first emotions of his wrath, being soothed by my kind aunt, he made proposals that he should administer, and receive consolation. The old lady, who never expected, I suppose, to hear again the credentials of love, was so enlivened by the sound, that Despair, lately her companion, took her flight with PRUDENCE. I, who never had any acquaintance with the sage dame (Prudence, I mean, for my aunt has given up all title to the character of sapience) thought she had erected an impregnable fortress in the old dowager’s heart. What was my surprise then, when I found she had surrendered without the least capitulation? The good lady, thinking she had no time to lose, commenced bride before her poor niece dreamt of the transition. How, I wonder, could I survive the shock of losing such a lover? I did however bear it most heroically: but the loss of the lover was not the only consideration.

The day after the ceremony, my aunt and new uncle gave me to understand that I had no farther favours to expect from them. “Well, madam,” said I, since you have chosen a protector of your person, you’ll permit me to appoint a guardian to my fortune, and to withdraw my person from those who have no right to detain it.” “To Mr. Selden,” answered she, ready to burst with passion, “as my husband, I can transfer my power. He will not abuse it. Indeed he had once a better opinion of you than you deserved.” “I am glad, for your sake, madam,” said I, “as well as my own, that he was an inconstant. You have found the ‘way to win him,’ I hope you have also learned the ‘way to keep him.’”

I don’t know, my dear, whether I do right in giving you this account of myself. Perhaps you will think a little more respect to my aunt would become me better; but she ceases to be a respectable character.

The chief reason for my troubling you with another letter before I receive an answer to the first, is, to intreat the favour of your brother to indulge my wishes that I may choose him for a guardian. Tell him, if he do not accept this trust, he will distress me inexpressibly, for I know no other person on whom I dare rely. His character excites my confidence, and his near relationship to you, my sisterly regard. Procure for me a compliance with this first desire of the heart of your

faithfully affectionate
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XV.

To Miss Woodford.

I AM commissioned, my dear Miss Woodford, by my brother to return an immediate answer to your letter, and to assure you that he esteems the trust you wish to repose in him as an honour conferred upon him; and, as your present situation must be disagreeable to you, he intends setting out with my sister and me next Monday for Bath, when they will intreat the pleasure of your company back with them, if you can make their place of residence agreeable to you. It would be injurious to you to doubt your acquiescence. Our friendship, which has hitherto subsisted by literary rather than by personal intercourse, will, I hope, be mutually increased by a nearer intimacy.

Mrs. Berkeley intends to resign her house, which is large and commodious, to my brother, and will live in a little hut, as she calls it, adjoining their garden. This place, though small, is convenient and pleasant, and, as Mr. Berkeley comes down at the times of vacation, she thinks it will be more prudent for him to reside with her, than in this family, with two unmarried, young, and not absolutely disagreeable, ladies.

You find I depend on your accepting my brother's and sister's invitation; prepare, my dear, to add to our delights by your society. All this family are as much disposed to love you as your ever affectionate

LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER XVI.

*To Mrs. Berkeley.**Bath,—————*

IN parting from you, dearest madam, I felt the insufficiency of temporal pursuits for the enjoyment of perfect happiness. My husband and my sister were with me; the weather, and the journey, promised pleasure; the design of the excursion was the relief of uneasiness, and the increase of our mutual felicity; yet my spirits were exceedingly depressed on bidding you adieu! Most probably, had you accompanied us, some circumstance, now unforeseen, would have allayed our entire satisfaction. Such is the condition of humanity, "this is not our abiding place," yet how many causes have I for thankfulness! I will cease to lament our short separation, and enjoy, whilst I can communicate, pleasure.

We are all safely arrived, and, as I know you are particularly interested for my health, I can assure you I have received benefit as well as amusement from the journey. We have been successful in the principal object of our wishes. Mrs. Selden has, though unwillingly, resigned her trust, and Miss Woodford has, in due form, chosen Mr. Herbert for her guardian.

What could the poor aunt expect from an engagement contracted so late in life, and with a man, the obvious motive of whose attachment, was her fortune? How melancholy a proof is she of the weakness of human nature, which knows not how to choose the ingredients of happiness! The lady is, it seems, remarkably whimsical about her health, and though her strict attention to it was awhile suspended by the novelty of a Bath life, and afterwards by the still more pleasing novelty of a love address, yet the more uniform scenes of domestic retirement will recall her gloomy ideas, and the farther encroachment of time naturally increase her infirmities.

Mr. Selden bears a strong resemblance to the picture Miss Woodford drew of him, yet her contempt of his demerits added some colourings beyond the life.

Our amiable ward prepossessed me in her favour on her first appearance. Her person is extremely agreeable, though not regularly beautiful. Her address is polite, yet friendly. Her heart seems to be already attached to us, with the utmost fervour I may say, for she considers us in too exalted a light. She thinks herself to be in a state of obligation to us, and expresses the gratitude she feels in terms, which, were there the merit she supposes, would be due not to the instrument, but to the first cause. But this is frequently the case with lively, generous spirits—their approbations and dislikes are seldom bounded by mediocrity. Every object of their love and friendship is supremely excellent; whoever occasions their dislike, superlatively disagreeable. Miss Woodford rather idolizes than esteems, and wounds by unmerited panegyric.

My sister and she are united in a strict friendship; I wish her to treat us with the same freedom. Mr. Herbert is delighted with her; he had seen her several times, but never before enjoyed much of her conversation. There is something inexpressibly sprightly in

her manner, and witty in her repartees. She will be a most agreeable addition to our family, for she has given us reason to hope that she will be a partaker of our happiness.

Ah! my dear madam, I find nothing here to recompense me for the loss of your conversation. My dearest Mr. Herbert is with me, but though ever amiable, ever excellent, he never appears to be so amiable, so estimable, as when employed in a constant succession of benevolent offices, searching to redress injuries, to mediate differences, to be blessed by the orphan and the widow. I shall rejoice to be restored to the country and to you, yet I will not indulge a murmur whilst we are separated by an act of duty.

Last night we were at the Rooms, where there was a splendid appearance. The attention of the gentlemen was divided between our two lovely friends, but my sister had more than an equal share of admiration. She behaved with such unaffected modesty, on the distinctions she received, that I love her more than ever.

Unexpected visitors compel me to lay down my pen. I will soon resume it, but have now only time to subscribe myself,

dearest madam,
your most dutifully affectionate
CAROLINE HERBERT.

Mr. Herbert in continuation.

I CANNOT resist the inclination I feel to add a few words in my Caroline's letter to our mutually respected mother, before I comply with her request that I would seal it. She has told you, madam, how well she supported the journey. She has also acquainted you with the admiration our friendly belles excited, but she has not informed you, and perhaps she is ignorant of the effects of her own charms. She was universally allowed, not only to excel her fair companions, but to be the finest woman ever seen at Bath.—The natural dignity of her person is, you know, heightened by the present circumstance, but the benignity of her mind, impressed on her countenance, was the irresistible attraction.

Truly may woman be called "the Almighty's last, best gift!" O, I discover new excellencies in my amiable wife every day: her disposition is truly angelic; she sees, pities, and gently seeks to remove the infirmities of others, she endeavours to render these subservient to her own improvement, for, with the rest of her virtues, she preserves the truest humility.

If the ladies here were acquainted with the perfections of my Caroline, they would not only wish to resemble her in person, but to imitate her virtues.

Once more, madam, be pleased to accept my reiterated thanks for this inestimable present, and do me the justice to believe that

I am
your most affectionate, dutiful,
and grateful,

C. HERBERT.

LETTER XVII.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

ALREADY, my dear madam, I am tired of this place. I cannot think that the happiness of rational beings can consist in dressing, visiting, walking the parade, and streets, and crowding at the Rooms. The churches indeed are open as well as the Rooms, but where ever diversions are eagerly pursued, the mind becomes unsettled, and duties are seldom regularly performed. Strange! unaccountable! that every one should be so fond of life, and yet so many indifferent to the purposes of living. Youth must be allowed indulgence; it is the proper season of gaiety. Should it not be also considered as the season of improvement? The time for the cultivation of every seed of virtue?

With what peculiar advantages have I been blessed! In parents, who were always the kindest, most indulgent of friends; who, by blending delight with instruction, gave me a preference of their conversation to the gayest society; in a brother attached to me by more than the usual ties of fraternal affection; and all those dear relations anxiously solicitous for the improvement of my mind. I fear I do not sufficiently compassionate those frailties in others, from which my education and your examples have secured me.

Assist me, dear madam, in guarding my heart against any lurking vanity; but I cannot long enjoy any place, where constant engagements fatigue the body, enervate the mind, and unfit it for the noblest exercises. I declare I think even a week at Bath, to partake the whole round of diversions, is too long a time for the enjoyment of them, and yet my spirits still bound (if I may use the expression) at the sprightly notes of a dance; I love a concert, and relish a good theatrical performance, but I think their enjoyment depends on the moderation with which they are pursued.

We have agreed to leave Bath the latter end of this week, and after staying about ten days in London shall set out on our return to my dear mother.

I am still more charmed with Miss Woodford; there is such an unaffected frankness in her acknowledgement of faults, into which she is hurried by her vivacity. But I wish her to restrain every shaft of ridicule, which wounds others, and recoils upon herself.

O! madam, how thankful am I for conjugal happiness. When I observe many of the married parties, (for I cannot call them pairs) of this fashionable world, and see the lords of the creation, particularly, ashamed of being thought capable of a constant attachment, sanctified by the laws of God and man; I pity their weakness, and lament their infatuation. Do they not tacitly reproach themselves for their choice? Or do they not publicly declare that their happiness does not arise from each other's society.

What a miserable being should I have been with one of these contemnors of connubial felicity! Would you believe it, madam? Some of these deserters from the matrimonial contract, and other gay flutterers, could not be persuaded for a time that Mr. Herbert and I were those unfashionable creatures, Husband and Wife. They concluded we were merely lovers, and when convinced of their mistake, rallied us most unmercifully on our egregious want of taste. Mr. Herbert is required to be gallant, his wife to be less domestic, and more gay:—A husband, a wife, and a sister to be always of a party, is

Gothic to the last degree. Miss Woodford, indeed, enlivens the gravity of such a society; but as Mr. Herbert appears in the character of her guardian, it is thought to be too much in the style of a family picture.

Thanks to Heaven! Mr. Herbert is invulnerable to these attacks. He sees, admires, and applauds every external accomplishment; he esteems and venerates every mental excellence, and in such a manner, as proves that his own heart is gratified by the observation. But he can by his praises, exalt some, without depreciating others, and pay the debt due to every estimable quality, and agreeable appearance, without endangering his fidelity. He is not to be influenced by the maxims and examples of that part of the world, who sacrifice duty at the shrine of fashion. His duty is the basis of his happiness. Such, my dear madam, is the husband of my choice, the son of your approbation!

But whilst I blame the illaudable customs of the inconsiderate, I rejoice in the number of the worthy. How many of both sexes do we know whose minds are an ornament to human nature! yet I must add, that many have not sufficient fortitude to stem the torrent of profane and indecent mirth. Too fearful of incurring public ridicule, they conceal sentiments which do honour to their own hearts, and lest they should make a breach in politeness, really break down a branch of social virtue. They fear to acknowledge a singularity, which is a source of the most delightful consciousness, and would blush at the confession of a hope, which is the only support under disappointment.

Most fervently do I wish that a spirit of virtuous emulation could be excited amongst those who now behold Mr. Herbert's accomplishments with envy: and in my own sex a desire of outshining in real excellence only. O that they would consider of what infinite consequence it is, rather to deserve esteem than to attract admiration! That the autumn and winter of life must succeed to the spring and summer: and that they who survive the blooming seasons without having made a provision for the declining, will find added years are only lengthened misery. In you I see that the matronly time may be enjoyed where the youthful hours have been improved! An imitation of your virtues is the highest ambition of

Your ever dutiful and
affectionate daughter,
C. HERBERT.

LETTER XVIII.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

I OUGHT, much earlier, my dear madam, to have remembered that it was my *duty* to have thanked you for every proof I have received of your friendship, and to have contributed with my beloved sister to alleviate the sadness her absence naturally excites. The busy scenes in which we have been engaged, occasioned my silence; but this excuse is insufficient to satisfy myself: Will it be accepted by you? I know your goodness; you will readily forgive me, and I shall more severely blame myself for your indulgence.

My brother and sister have informed you they are charmed with my friend Miss Woodford. She *idolizes* them, yet merrily exclaims, "This sister of yours is a mighty good sort of woman, Lucy; but she has more than her share of admiration. I do not like she should be of my party in a gay circle: She has already robbed me of many a follower—perhaps of many a heart. I believe I shall not love her."

The gay coquet is for unlimited conquest. She tells me it is well she has some estimable qualities to counterbalance "a superfluity of naughtiness," for she owns she pants for a host of admirers. She is versed in all the modes of *captivation* (to use her own expression). She is one moment all encouraging sweetness: the next, all distant reserve, according to the different persons on whom she plays off her arts. Her eye penetrates the hearts of all her beholders, and regulates its motions in conformity.

Is it not somewhat surprising, madam, that a friendship should subsist between two persons, one of whom is avowedly ambitious of universal conquest? But this *rapacity* in my friend has taught me *moderation*. I frequently see her so mortified, if one expected victim remains insensible, or escapes from her chains,—though perhaps ten offer at her shrine, so that I congratulate myself on my superiority of mind, and love her perhaps the better, for permitting me to excel in this respect. The sincere attachment of one man of good sense, good nature,—in short, of such a man as my brother, would gratify my highest ambition. However, I think, "take it for all in all," I shall never be happier than I am at present.

Let this little flutterer enjoy her triumphs. The time will come, I tell her, when she will find a conqueror. "Then, perhaps," said she, "some recreant knight may enlist under your banner, and declare himself a captive to become a conqueror."—"I observe," answered I, "you will not permit me to indulge a more improbable *perhaps*, that when you are enslaved for life, some heart never subjected to *your* power, may confess *mine*."

I told you, dear madam, I wished for such a husband as my brother makes.—Miss Woodford says, he is an adorable husband, but rather too grave, and solemn, rather too little a man of this world. She does not consider her own sensibility, if she thinks she could be happy with a modern husband.

I saw an instance yesterday at the Rooms, of one of these beings, who made a very sweet-tempered wife miserable. He had been absent from Bath for a month, and returned unexpectedly. We had prevailed on his lady to accompany us to the Rooms. Mr. Fowler (that is his name) entered about an hour after us. Mrs. Fowler's emotion on his sudden appearance would have been a very high gratification to him, had he been only an

admirer; but as he was her husband, he was mortified by it. He addressed himself, with the utmost ease and politeness to all his acquaintance; but “Your servant, Mrs. Fowler, I thought you had been at home,” was the kind salutation to his wife, after he had, with the greatest cordiality, enquired after the health of every common acquaintance. “Do not you remember, my dear,” said she, “that you left me indisposed?”—“I see you here, child,” replied he, “and therefore conclude you are well.”—“But,” said she, “will you not tell me you are glad to see me here? I am much rejoiced to see *you*.”—He hummed a tune, turned round upon his heel, and mixed with the crowd.

Though Miss Woodford most probably would have ridiculed Mrs. Fowler’s joyful surprise at the unexpected return of her husband, his indifference shocked her pride, and alarmed her fears. “Good God! Lucy,” said she, “is this the treatment I must expect as a wife? Yet this man, I suppose, was a dying lover. Wretches! they are not worth a moment’s pain.”

My sister, upon whose arm the dejected wife hung, and who is much admired by Mr. Fowler, took the first opportunity of speaking to him. (What advantages, dear madam, are superior merit and fortune, when they procure to their possessors a happy influence over the conduct of others.) “Do you know,” said she, “that your pretended indifference has lowered the spirits of your good lady! and I should surely wrong both her and you if I were to suppose that *your wife* was not entitled to the same attentions you pay to *another’s*. You must endeavour to regain your credit with me by appearing more unfashionable, and shewing, even before this assembly, a portion of that tenderness which you must feel for the object of your choice.”—“I vow, Mrs. Herbert,” answered he, “you are very severe upon me, yet I will endeavour to improve by this lecture:

‘From lips like those what precepts
fail to move?’

“Come, my dear,” continued he, turning to his lady, “excuse your converted Bashful Constant. I *am* glad to see you abroad, and if you and these ladies give me leave, will join your party for the evening.”

My brother, who had been walking about the room with a friend, now returned to us, and we were all satisfied. Miss Woodford was engaged with an agreeable partner; I employed myself in making observations on the reunited couple, and my brother and sister are never otherwise than happy.

My sister’s eyes sparkled with added lustre from the joy she felt in having contributed to Mrs. Fowler’s happiness; I saw that Mr. Fowler watched my brother’s looks and behaviour to my sister, and was not unsuccessful in his endeavours to imitate them. Indeed my brother and sister are so much esteemed and admired that I think it is in their power to make *even virtue fashionable*. Of what importance it is to be uniformly good! Such persons need not fear any ill-natured retort, when their benevolence influences them to give advice.

Miss Woodford praises my brother for his inimitable tenderness to his wife; but I tell her she considers that part of his conduct as more meritorious than I can allow it to be; for who does not admire my sister? They seem each to be formed for the other.

How happy must Miss Woodford think herself in such a guardian as my brother, and in such a friend as my sister, and equally happy in my relation to both, and in your friendship

is, dear Madam,
Your most affectionate, obliged,
and grateful
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER XIX.

*To Mrs. Berkeley.**London.*—————

AFTER a pleasant journey, we are safely arrived, dearest Madam, and all in high spirits. The addition my brother makes to our society, is no small improvement of our happiness. He was so kind as to meet us about ten miles from town, and escorted us hither. He is very much charmed with Miss Woodford's person and conversation, and she, whether from a mere desire of gaining another admirer, or from a real sensibility of his merit, puts forth all her attractions. I should be very happy in such an alliance; for though I think Miss Woodford has rather a *present* passion for admiration, yet she has just sentiments of female delicacy, and so much softness of disposition, that the man who can gain her heart will inevitably guide her conduct. One who could enjoy her cheerfulness, and yet restrain it from deviating into levity, who had real good-nature blended with resolution; such an one, I doubt not, would render her perfectly amiable and completely happy.

She pays much greater attention to my brother, than I have observed in her to any of her flatterers. He was of our party last night, and his eyes were seldom directed to any other object than Miss Woodford: her's were very little excursive, and their conversation appeared to be very interesting. My brother has been constantly with us, and is very desirous we should prolong our stay; but I cannot comply with his request. I am not only impatient to see you again, but another reason for my refusal is, that if he has an inclination to be with us, he can accompany us into the country, and by making you a partaker in them, heighten our delights.

I am certain my brother's heart is attached, and I rather think Miss Woodford's is touched; but she is a little enigmatical. I am somewhat at a loss to distinguish her general fondness of admiration, from her particular regard. She asked me this morning, whether I was really determined to leave London so soon as Monday. I mentioned my promise to you. "Miss Herbert," said she, "will not like town so well when you and her brother have left it. Indeed she will have Mr. Berkeley to gallant her about."

I read her fears. My brother had not hinted before her his resolution to attend us.—"Do you wish to stay longer in town, my dear? I dare say Mrs. Fenning will be equally glad of your's as my sister's company. We shall part from you with regret, but you would soon rejoin us, and the thoughts of seeing my dear mother, and making her happy in the society of my brother, who intends going down with us, will be our consolation." She blushed; "You mistake me, dear Mrs. Herbert, London would have lost its principal charm, when you had left it. Permit me to attend you, and I shall leave the gay town with pleasure."

What think you, dearest madam? are not these prognostics of a regard that will in time prevent all future sallies of coquetry?—For all our sakes I hope so; Miss Woodford would then exchange the insatiable rapacity of universal conquest, which exposes to perpetual disappointments, for a mild and gentle influence over a faithful heart, ever attentive to her happiness.

She has told my brother she is glad he is to be of our travelling party. "I want a Damon," said she, "to enliven the solitude of the country. But you have some rural beauty, I suppose, who will engross all your leisure hours.—His answer was not only gallant, but tender. "This was a compliment I extorted," said she, blushing. "Hush!"—(for he was proceeding) "I forbid, absolutely forbid another syllable on the subject."

On Tuesday then we hope to be with you. My sister has been under a necessity of promising to give Mrs. Fenning a month or six weeks of her company. That lady was quite importunate, as she begins to receive ceremonious visits next week, and wants a female companion on this important occasion.

Adieu! dearest, ever honoured madam. I earnestly wish for the time which may restore to the best of mothers her

ever affectionate and dutiful
daughter,
CAROLINE HERBERT.

LETTER XX.

To Miss Herbert.

My dear Friend,
 YOU needed not so earnestly have desired me to write, for who that has a lover, does not want a confidant? I intended to have written sooner, but the assiduities of the lover occasioned the delay.

Mr. Berkeley is most enchantingly enamoured. He lives only for me. He is very amiable, very accomplished, and so forth, but he is not so valuable, so estimable a character as your brother. I am not at all surprised at Miss Berkeley's behaviour, "All for love, or the world well lost," when inspired by such an object; but lest there should not be such another being for me, I will venture to fix my choice upon one who claims alliance with him by virtue, as well as family connexions.

Heigh ho! Lucy, the spirit of coquetry is evaporating very fast. I really believe I can be happy with Mr. Berkeley, for he is very clever, very goodnatured, is pleased with my excursive humours, (N.B. if I marry, I must put some curb on them, lest they should run away with his love) and can improve me by his sententious observations.

But why do I mention marriage? I, who have harangued so much upon the blessings of liberty. Shall I ever submit to be fettered by indissoluble chains? What a change must I experience! I have very little taste for domestic employments. What would the good man say to me, if, when he expected his dinner, I should only give him a taste— of my forgetfulness. Would he not lose all relish for a vivacity which he might (and not very improperly perhaps) term, giddiness? Ah! Lucy, after all, the single state is best for me. But then

“Who can bear the dread effects of
 time;
 “The pang of despised love, th’ op-
 probrious taunt,
 “The insolence of pity; female con-
 tumely;
 “When she herself might chance to
 rule for life
 “By one concession?”

Alas! whether as wife, or spinster, that the reign of beauty must soon be at an end, general observation verifies. Shall I then flutter about and command for a few years longer, or shall I now give up the sceptre, take the distaff, and learn to obey?

This man teizes me to make him happy. Ah! I am afraid he will not find it to be in my power. I should be terrified to death if I were ever to be in Mrs. Herbert's present situation. Whimsical enough to fatigue a whole family! and then, to have half a dozen brats perhaps roaring and shrieking about one.—What a scene of confusion! “Chaos would come again.” A crazy mother, and noisy infants! Who could bear to come near us?

A duet with my spouse, would make little harmony for me I doubt, and a chorus of brats, discord insupportable!—Well then! shall I act my part in life sola, or shall I choose a mate, and enter upon my noviciate of improvement? I doubt I must have a long probation. Here I must pause.

* * * * *

To resume. If I could but contrive, like Mrs. Herbert, to extend my sovereignty, after vowing subjection, I think I could resign the liberty of flying upon the wing of pleasure in pursuit of universal admiration: for to be frank and ingenuous, it is rather an anxious state to be always on the flutter for superiority of beauty. If the envy of the one sex, and the admiration of the other, gratify my vanity, yet the dread of being less envied, by being less admired, destroys my enjoyment.

* * * * *

There is something strangely propitious to love in solitude. Here this man caught me alone in an arbour, and breathed forth such fervent professions that he melted my heart,—and I absolutely owned—a little kind of susceptibility in his favour. Bless me! how he was transported. Simpletons these men! with all their boasted wisdom, to let us see how much we have them in our power; they shew a good opinion of us in thinking we shall not abuse it, but it is a violent, and sometimes an irresistible temptation.

He then began truly to talk of fixing a time for his happiness; but this was too much. I stopt him, told him the subject should have a review another time, but that I had made sufficient concessions for the present. He intreated, but I was peremptory. Is he not my captive! And shall he presume to dictate laws to his conqueror?—He submitted with a sigh.—Poor heart! I wish it has not more cause to despair when it expects to be most gratified.—We left the grove, and Mrs. Herbert meeting us, the scene of courtship entirely closed.

Well, my dear, one comfort is, no change of condition can yet take place. Mrs. Herbert must become a mother before your Clara can think of being a wife. In two months the former expects to commence that character. What will be the season for my transformation I cannot tell, but I assure you it shall be several months before I change the name of

CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XXI.

To Miss Woodford.

My dear Clara,
I AM quite fatigued with dress, ceremony, and crowds.—I pine for the country, and hope another week will restore me to it. A month is surely a sufficient sacrifice to form and fashion: but before I mention a word more on this subject let me enter on one more pleasing.

I congratulate you, my friend, on the conquest of a truly valuable heart. Indeed I told you it was secured in your possession before you left town; but you, judging of others by yourself, or perhaps actuated by your usual humility, would not believe Mr. Berkeley was in love. Did you imagine that he too was a trifler? Or, did you affect humility that we might search more attentively for proofs to gratify your vanity.

Believe me, Mr. Berkeley will imitate the bright example my brother sets him; and I hope you will give him a counterpart of my amiable, my excellent sister. At present, be not displeased if I insinuate, that you are not sufficiently sensible of your good fortune. Could it admit a doubt whether it be more eligible to choose a husband with whom you may interchange friendship and confidence, or still to practise the dangerous art of entangling by your charms, even those whom you could not reward with your esteem? The preference, you now seem inclined to give, will increase your own value. No unnecessary delays, I conjure you. As soon as my sister's recovery be perfected (and for all our sakes may heaven preserve her!) I shall expect to be principal bride-maid at your nuptials. As for the subsequent parade, it is, I confess, very fatiguing, but, with your choice, it would be easily supportable.

Mrs. Fenning enjoys the flutter of company. She has been trained for the gay world, while I, a poor rustic, am dispirited, tired, and disgusted, with endless engagements. What shall I be then after a third display? I assure you I was fatigued with the formality, after my sister's appearance, though it was in the country; and I could not refrain from asking her how she could reconcile herself to such an abuse of time; she, whose every hour was before rationally employed.

"We owe to the world," answered she, "a conformity to the customs it has established, where that conformity is consistent with the duties of life. You say, my dear, these visits are merely ceremonious, and sometimes scarcely so innocent, for that they are frequently made only to gratify ill-natured observations. I doubt we must attribute less to friendship than to fashion and curiosity; but it must be our own faults surely if we do not make friends of our observers. Some intercourse with the polite world is requisite to preserve those accomplishments which add a grace to virtue, and recommend the practice of it. Singularity in trifles shows more of affectation than of real superiority."

These were the excellent sentiments of my admirable sister; but Mrs. Fenning considers dress and visits as the principal purposes of life, and her outside is embellished, whilst her mind has remained uncultivated. She is tired to death if we pass an evening by ourselves. She yawns over a book, detests work, and is very much the fine lady. She admires my sister, but she does not endeavour to imitate her. I believe, however, there is

more of fashion than relish in her dissipation; and I really think the fault lies rather in her head than heart. She is friendly, though fashionable.

If you can spare time to write me another letter, you will very much oblige
your sincerely affectionate
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER XXII.

To Miss Herbert.

THESE people, Lucy, will absolutely annihilate my coquetry; and you, let me tell you, are a party in the same scheme. No constraint I must confess, but a generous reference to my own inclinations, in a point most essential to my happiness, is the only argument urged here. I consulted Mrs. Herbert.

“My dear,” said she, “I thank you for this confidence. My brother’s and your happiness are equally the subject of my wishes. You are the best judge by what means to obtain it; consult your own heart, and be directed by it. Your prudence will suggest to you,” she added, “that coquetry, which is not defensible in a maiden, is still more inexcusable in a wife. My brother is truly good, but to make you happy, you must think him, not only estimable, but agreeable.”

Mr. Herbert, when I asked his advice, only said, that as my guardian, and Mr. Berkeley’s brother, he was deeply interested in an event, which seemed to promise happiness to both, but that he left the determination to my judgment, and sensibility of Mr. Berkeley’s merit.

Then comes your letter, which extols this man, and celebrates my good fortune in high strains. The creature, to be sure, is not despicable, and he addresses me with a pleasing pathos enough. If he can but contrive to make such a husband as your brother, I must be happy.

Last night Mrs. Herbert was indisposed. She had fatigued herself by a long walk on some benevolent visits, and on her return, the heat of the room, and her weariness, occasioned her fainting two or three times. Never was any man so tenderly alarmed as your brother. His whole soul was agitated. He held her reclining head upon his breast, and his cheeks were scarce less pale than her’s. As she revived, he became more composed, and her perfect recovery inspired him with such joy, as shewed evidently that the lover was not extinguished in the husband.

He watches her every look, and I tell him he is impertinent in his frequent inquiries about her health. Yet, Lucy, we should all be pleased with the sedulity which we affect to ridicule. I have desired Mr. Berkeley to be very attentive in observing his brother’s every action, that I may have a copy of his perfections, a fair copy, without blot, or omission of one single excellence.

* * * * *

Would you believe it, my dear? This man is not the implicit admirer I thought and wished him to be. Truly he has been finding fault with the manner in which I wear my hair. I looked at him with astonishment.—“You are the first lover, Mr. Berkeley,” said I, “who ever presumed to dictate laws to his mistress, and in dress too! You infringe upon the female prerogative, for is not woman sole arbitress of the fashion?”

“You do not, in your heart, blame me, my dear Miss Woodford,” said he, “for this instance of my frankness and sincerity. You are superior to those arts by which many ladies wish to enslave the reason of their admirers.—You allow me the exercise of mine; and it is from this exercise of my rational faculties, that you owe your influence over my

heart.”—“Ah! flatterer, you celebrate me for being faultless, that you may have the pleasure of expatiating on my follies.”—“No, Miss Woodford, I do not attribute perfection to any mortal; but I think you so emulous of it, that you are not afraid of hearing truth; and as for your sex being the arbitress of the mode, give me leave to tell the amiable arbitress of my fate, that the desire of pleasing our’s is your actuating principle. If you direct the mode, we influence you.”

“O, wretch! what a thought!—Though I dare answer for it, if there were not a man in the world, we should sit all day in our nightcaps.” (aside to Mrs. Herbert). She betrayed my secret, so I made my exit, for the two he-creatures exulted beyond endurance.

* * * * *

Now, Lucy, what do you think of this being to whom I have not yet given authority to address any thing to me but flattery? Does he not lord it well? I shall be as very a wife as obedience can render me, if I now resign the reins of despotic sway.—No, it must not be—his every idea of me should include perfection. Yet, to be serious, I like him not the worse for his freedom; but as to altering my manner of dress, not one atom must bend in subjection, for that would be giving up every thing. Perhaps when he is quite reconciled to this fashion, I may abate somewhat in the excess of it.

* * * * *

I am retired, my dear, from a scene of humiliation. A Mrs. Wright drank tea with us this afternoon, and brought with her a Miss Elden—really a prettyish woman. I will confess too that she was elegantly dressed, and not in the extremity of the fashion. She is modest and reserved, and entirely free from pride and affectation. So much justice demands—now piqued vanity takes its turn.

Mr. Berkeley praises this Miss Elden more than becomes the lover of another woman: that woman present too: shameful! I am not accustomed to hear another commended at my expense. Is it not mortifying to have another elevated on my ruins? Here my poor dress has been taken to pieces, and Miss Elden’s is set up as the standard of the proper and becoming. I am piqued, as I said before, but you too much resemble your sister to pity me.—Mr. Herbert thinks her very pleasing! “She dresses like my Caroline,” was his expressive observation. Such a loving husband! Nothing charms him but as it agrees with that idea of female excellence, which he takes from Mrs. Herbert. I am pettish and displeased.

* * * * *

I take up my pen in a different humour. Resentment has subsided, and the tenderest commiseration has taken place. Mrs. Herbert is very ill. Mr. Herbert is very anxious, and very miserable. Mrs. Berkeley and Mr. Berkeley are deeply agitated, and your Clara is shocked and terrified.—Lord bless me! how should I support such a state? I, who have not the mental resources Mrs. Herbert has. Adieu! till to-morrow.

* * * * *

Mrs. Herbert is better. She has had a fine night, and is as cheerful as ever, to the great delight of all her friends, and to the inexpressible joy of her husband.

She desires me to tell you she shall be very glad if you do not exceed the time mentioned in your last letter; unless some projected amusement solicits your stay, and she then begs you to prolong it: but for my part I entreat that you would be with us as soon as possible, or I shall be absolutely deserted. The sick-room will confine Mrs. Berkeley

almost as closely as her daughter. I shall be tired of keeping chamber, and yet must in decency be more there than with the gentlemen.—Come then, and relieve the anticipated distresses of

your faithful and affectionate,
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XXIII.

To Mrs. Bennett.

YOU remember, my dear madam, it was agreed between us, that we might continue to be sincere friends without becoming constant correspondents. I know you hate writing, and I am not fond of it, but upon great occasions.

The birth of a young Herbert deserves to be celebrated by my pen—Mrs. Herbert became a mother last Wednesday, and in the antediluvian phrase, “is as well as can be expected.” The boy is a jolly boy, has fine strong lungs, and makes more different faces in a moment, than ever coquet practised before her glass.

Mrs. Herbert has begun to perform the maternal office. What a horrid scene of confinement opens, from the care of this little squaller! But she is quite domesticated. I believe the dear good matron has scarcely a thought which does not centre in husband, child, or mother. What a trio! You, my good Coz., are not much more of a modern, only your duties are not enlarged to the sphere of brat-rearing. Never repine, child! ’tis a circumstance which rather demands your gratitude.

Miss Herbert and I have a dull time of it. I should say I have, for she, poor imitative being, is commenced downright aunt in thought, word, and deed. Truly she must nurse sometimes, though I tell her she will give her sister a feveret by the fright which her awkwardness occasions.

I dare not attempt to handle the little creature, lest I should let it fall, or indulge Lucy with an opportunity of retaliating. Besides, if it should attack our ears with a squall while in my arms, or even make a wry face, the mother would stain my fostering character with the imputation of causing it.

Mr. Herbert is all rapture. He passes the greatest part of the day in the sick chamber; and how do you think he employs himself? He must play at lullaby too. The little animal is laid on his lap upon a pillow, and he prates to it like any experienced nurse. At other times he reads to the poor prisoner, who, though I think she must be heartily tired of her confinement, is all thankfulness and serenity.

What a uniform succession of events! To drink caudle, see her child drest, and to feed it; to hear the harangue of an old whining crone, who pours forth the antiquated expletives of praise over the little reptile, who lies sprawling on her lap: these are the joys of a lying-in woman! are they not captivating?

Yet I own Mrs. Herbert has a most rational enjoyment, which throws a cheering light even over these scenes of still life. What a husband has she to be thankful for!

As to Mrs. Berkeley she is delighted with the infantile scenes, and to be the principal. She will spoil the boy; I can see she will; but they laugh at my remarks, and I ridicule their folly. Mr. Berkeley professes fondness for his nephew. Such a little machine to set to work the minds of rational people!

* * * *

I really believe, Mrs. Bennett, I could in time love this little being. I was alone in Mrs. Herbert’s chamber about an hour since. She was asleep; the nurse below, enjoying the perpetual motion of her own tongue, when lo! the babe set up a most outrageous

cry.—I was alarmed; quite upon the flutter. What now is to be done? I'll e'en take him up. Accordingly, recollecting the manner and form in which these feeble mortals are to be touched, I compassed the mighty deed, fed him, quieted him, and then, charmed with his good humour, I contemplated his placid features, till I actually gave him a kiss.

He is a very pretty child. I do love him; and I considered what claim such helpless innocents have to our care and attention. Who knows but I may one day be a fond mother? I won't answer for it, however, nor do I desire the trial.—But to return.

While I was sitting with little Charles's hand in mine, the door softly opened, and Mrs. Berkeley with Mr. Herbert entered. I was ashamed of my office, (having protested against it) till I saw I gave real pleasure to the grandmother and father. The latter told me he had a higher regard for me than ever.

Mrs. Herbert now awaked, and joined her thanks for my attention to her little one. She pressed my hand, and told me she hoped for an opportunity of repaying me for this most endearing proof of love. I assure you I intend to nurse every day; but perhaps 'tis only the novelty of the employment that pleases me. I think, however, I must love this infant for its parents' sakes.

This is hitherto entirely a nursery *letter*, but I have a trifling subject to mention for a little variety. I know Miss Herbert informed you when you were in town of Mr. Berkeley's attachment to me. I have only time to add, that I believe I shall like him well enough to make him an husband. Can you have any idea that he will have a good wife in

your ever affectionate,

CLARA WOODFORD?

LETTER XXIV.

To Mrs. Bennett.

ANOTHER great occasion demands my pen. I may possibly lose the half of my fortune. You know my aunt's jointure on her decease reverts to me. Mrs. Selden, however, intends to withhold it, and insists that by my uncle's will she has a power of disposing of every thing.

My guardian, foreseeing some trouble from this knavish proceeding, determined on a journey to town. My aunt declares, (and her will, she says, shall confirm it) that the jointure was only to be mine in case my behaviour pleased her; otherwise she had the sole disposal of it.

Luckily, (providentially, Mrs. Herbert would say,) my uncle had not only informed me how the matter was circumstanced, but he had given me an exact copy of the will he put into her hands. They have certainly forged a will for my uncle.

I have also in my possession the letters which passed between my father and Counsellor Wilson; and after my father's death, those between my uncle and that gentleman on this subject; which mention the cutting off the entail on my brother's decease, and securing the estate to me. My aunt was ignorant of this trust, and on this ignorance the forgery was planned.

My presence was necessary, and, as the time of Mr. Herbert's continuance in town on this account, is uncertain, Mrs. Herbert, who is perfectly recovered, resolved to accompany us. Little Charles must of consequence be of our party. Mr. Herbert will most probably stay the remainder of the winter. So here we all are, except Mrs. Berkeley, whose health is always injured by the town air.

Mr. Herbert determines to endeavour to bring Mr. Selden to reason, without the disagreeable resources of the law. I hope he will have no great trouble, yet I sometimes fear the worst. How much am I indebted to my guardian! He immediately gave up every thing but what related to my affairs. Excellent man!

Mr. Berkeley came to town with us. His behaviour on this threatened diminution of my fortune, shews the sincerity of his affection; but matrimony is now the least subject of my thoughts. I protest I sometimes wish this man had made choice of Miss Herbert.— She would have suited him much better than I ever shall. I wonder he never liked her, for she is a very amiable girl. He says indeed that he always considered her as a second sister: it was a foolish fancy to entertain a fraternal affection, when he might have secured his happiness with the same person by a conjugal attachment.

Farewell, dear Mrs. Bennett. My spirits are not quite so much elevated as usual, but my heart is always equally, and very

affectionately your's,
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XXV.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

Dearest and honoured Madam,

THE sudden and unexpected summons which occasioned our separation affected me very sensibly, but circumstances proved its necessity, and Mr. Herbert's guardianship to Miss Woodford required it as a duty. I fancy our stay will not be very short. You know Mr. Herbert loves company, and enjoys, within the bounds of moderation, the town and its diversions. He has confined himself on my account for many months. He shall not be influenced to return sooner than his own inclination prompts him.

My dear little charge bore his journey beyond expectation. The delightful employ of nursing him will prevent me from being much in company, and from partaking many diversions; but Mr. Herbert can escort my sister and Miss Woodford. I am not surprised that he has a taste for company, as he possesses every requisite which can render conversation delightful and instructive.

You are as well acquainted with the merits of this excellent man as myself, but where the heart is attached, it will naturally dilate on the qualities of its beloved object; and yet how weak is the force of words, when they should express the tenderest emotions of the soul!

Mr. Herbert, in the midst of a gay world, is neither dissipated by pleasure, nor engrossed by business. He has been several times at Mr. Selden's, but that gentleman does not choose to be visible. Mr. Herbert is unwilling to blast the character of Mr. Selden, and desirous of shewing him he has a power of demanding the estate the other withholds.—My sweet boy calls loudly for me. Adieu! dearest madam.

* * * * *

The dear infant is sunk to sleep in my lap. I will endeavour to scribble another line, and if I borrow a few moments to give him a look or a kiss, his fond grandmother shall repay herself by taking upon her the office of nurse; a province the mother now seldom suffers to be invaded.

Indeed I often jest with Miss Woodford on the vicissitudes in her inclination. "Novelty, my dear Mrs. Herbert," she says, "is a powerful charm for light minds.—The matter had nothing else to recommend it.—Yes, upon second thoughts, I believe I congratulated myself on my own expertness in handling the brat. I have shewn my abilities, and am satisfied with applause. I love you mighty well, Charles! but no more nursing, do you hear, my boy? It destroys the whole system of fashionable regulations. I shall be a poor unsteady wife, Mrs. Herbert.—Warn your brother."

My sister is constant in her attendance on the sweet babe. She is really a fourth parent to him.

Miss Woodford, I believe, is very much engrossed by this threatened diminution of her fortune; and yet Mr. Herbert tells her he thinks it is in no danger, and she disclaims being at all affected by the affair; but her liveliness is so frequently interrupted, she is so often lost in meditation, that either this law matter, or the thought of approaching matrimony disturbs her mind.

She spoke much less than usual during the journey; indeed I have observed for some time past that she has had intervals of gravity, but her natural vivacity has never been so much clouded as now.

To contract so solemn an engagement as marriage, where new cares and duties alarm us with fears of being oppressed with the one, and unequal to the discharge of the other, is it not sufficient to cast a gloom over the brightest prospects?

“What a change!” she often says; “I, whose employments have all centered in dress and pleasure, must then begin to think of prudence and oeconomy. I, who have had only to consult my glass, must, when I marry, learn to consult—my husband.”

My brother is particularly urgent with her now to fix his happy day, but she will hear nothing of it at present. “What! marry a law suit? a contested estate? Imprudent Mr. Berkeley!”

Miss Woodford looked into my room just now: “You are complaining of me, Mrs. Herbert, or else it is my own guilty conscience that makes me suspicious.—My mother-elect has not the highest opinion of her intended daughter-in-law. I fear she will have a worse, for positively I can never make the wife I ought to be to Mr. Berkeley.”—“If you prefer any other, my dear”—“No, madam, but he is too good for me. However I’ll try to improve.—Six months may cause a total revolution in my sentiments. But finish your letter, and then I’ll take your pen.”

I will conclude with an assurance, which, though unnecessary, I know is always pleasing, that

I am,
dear and honoured madam,
your dutiful, affectionate, and
ever grateful daughter,
C. HERBERT.

Miss Woodford in continuation.

MRS. Herbert, madam, is so excellent that I despair of ever equalling, and am therefore almost discouraged from an attempt at imitating her.—I know not what magical influence may be produced by an alliance with her, but in the common series of cause and effect, I shall never be worthy of claiming a nearer affinity with her, nor, though I can avow a tender and reverential regard for you, shall I ever, I fear, be deserving the additional title of daughter to that of

your most obliged and
sincerely affectionate
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XXVI.

To Mrs. Bennet.

AFTER more than a month's daily attendance on Mr. Selden, my guardian has at last seen him, and forced an audience.

He was going out of his own house as Mr. Herbert came up to the door. His confusion betrayed his guilt. I shall not attempt to send particulars of their conversation. The important result was, that Mr. Selden told Mr. Herbert, his wife only wished to reduce Miss Woodford to a sense of her duty, by threatening her with a loss of that reversion, of which they knew they could not, nor ever intended to deprive her. They parted friends, and I hope there is an end of this matter.

I think we are not quite so happy as we were, and yet I scarcely know the reason. The day after I sent my last letter to you, we were invited to be of the party with Sir Robert and Lady Millbank, at a route and private dance. Mrs. Herbert could not conveniently accompany us, but, as she insisted that Mr. Herbert, Lucy, and I, should not confine ourselves on her account, we agreed to accept the invitation.

Mr. Berkeley had engaged me for a partner. Mr. Herbert sat down to cards, and Miss Herbert danced with a young nobleman, a Lord Wilton, a handsome, genteel, and, to all appearance, accomplished man, who was of the same college with Mr. Herbert. He is very gay, and though he chose Miss Herbert for a partner (perhaps because I was engaged; no vanity at all in the supposition) yet he divided his devoirs very equally between us.

I believe Mr. Berkeley was not in a state of felicity, but I could not help shewing that I was very happy. Birth, fortune, dress, and genteel manners were strong recommendations in Lord Wilton's favour; and to say the truth, I rather wished to have exchanged partners with Miss Herbert; not that I was influenced by partiality for the man, but his station:—There is an irresistible charm in rank and title.

Between his intervals of attention to us, he attached himself to Mr. Herbert with remarkable assiduity. The merits of this amiable man disarm even envy itself. To know him is a defence for a woman against any ill-passion. No one, who knows and does not endeavour to imitate him, can be worthy of a serious thought.

Lord Wilton waited on us next day, and, to our mortification, (your pardon, Lucy) seemed to gaze with more admiration on the matron, than on the spinsters; but he soon put us in good humour again by the volubility of his compliments, and we were all pleased with his conversation.

Mr. Herbert has returned his visit, and found a large and brilliant company. Lord Wilton has a sister, who is married to Lord D——, and he intreated Mrs. Herbert would permit him to introduce Lady D—— to her as a visitor. Accordingly she came a few days since with the two lords. She is a handsome and very lively woman. By frequenting the circles of the great, and being accustomed to shine in them, she has laid aside the blush of modesty, and ridicules silent diffidence.

A party was proposed for the play. Mr. Herbert declined going, unless Mrs. Herbert could accompany him. Lady D—— laughed at the *droll* refusal, as she called it: “Are you always dangling at your wife's apron string?” said she, “Or do you make the

pap, or undress the child? Your lady, perhaps, from the horrid office she has undertaken, may be unable to go, but she is too reasonable to immure you in a nursery. Besides, sir, do you think Mrs. Herbert can have no companion when you and these ladies leave her? I am sure she need never be at a loss for society.”

Her raillery however had no effect; he gazed tenderly on Mrs. Herbert to read her inclination in her looks: her desire of obliging him preponderated over every other, and she agreed to be of the party.

We went, and had a very agreeable evening. Lady D—— endeavoured to make Mr. Herbert quite gallant, and he was really more lively and agreeable than I ever before saw him. You know both he and Mrs. Herbert have naturally a thoughtful turn, yet he loves company. The still domestic life has the most charms for her, yet I must add that she gives up her own, whenever she can gratify his inclination.

But how I wander! I was not much pleased with Lord Wilton; the man seems to have no eyes but for Mrs. Herbert, and his tongue is officious in her praise.

As we past Lord D——’s in returning from the play, they intreated we would step in for half an hour. Lady D—— told Mr. Herbert his child would certainly be asleep, and therefore he could not take nurse’s office that night. Mr. Herbert however would not assent. He knew Mrs. Herbert did not wish to comply with the request. I always love to prolong a frolic, but it could not be.—With what delight did this excellent man return with his Caroline! She thanked him in the tenderest manner for his goodness.

We returned Lady D——’s visit last week. She was very importunate with us to stay supper. Mrs. Herbert declined the invitation as her young charge was not quite well. I was disposed to stay. Lord Wilton was peremptory for Mr. Herbert’s making one at the card-table.

Lady D—— resumed her raillery on Mr. Herbert. After supper she proposed toasts, and told him, as he could think of no other woman, he should be permitted to give *his wife*. He turned off the laugh, gave a very agreeable lady, and told Lady D—— that, though his heart was attached only to one, his good wishes, and a just sense of their merit, extended to all the fair sex. He added, that the excellent qualities of his wife served as a criterion by which to judge of others. Lady D—— did not relish his answer.

I cannot help observing, my dear Mrs. Bennet, that a strong shield of resolution is necessary to repel the darts of ridicule, which are levelled at the fidelity of the matrimonial life! and yet without faithful love how dreadful must be the engagement! Do not they render themselves completely despicable, who contemn and make a jest of plighted vows?

I am angry with Lady D—— for her ill-judged mirth. Mr. Herbert is not the proper object of light reflections. Such a man ought to be in love to complete his character. His tenderness is rational and manly. His heart feels more than he wishes to express before others, yet his eyes betray his invariable attachment. Happy the woman who preserves such a lover in a husband!

Mr. Berkeley, I am told, will make me as happy if it be not my own fault. Perhaps he would, but I am not able to answer for myself, therefore I will make him no promises.—He is not easy I doubt, but would he be more so if I was to become his wife? Ah! no, he does not know me. Our hearts are not allied, I fear, as those ought to be who contract the most solemn engagement in the sight of Heaven.—I do not know what to do

with him—perhaps I may make him a husband. That may be the next revolution. At present my thoughts are more than a little confused.

I told you we were not quite happy. Since our visit we have heard many things to the disadvantage of Lord Wilton's character. Mr. Herbert does not seem to discredit them, and yet he continues the acquaintance. He approves, however, Mrs. Herbert's proposal of declining any farther intercourse with Lady D——, but Lord Wilton has, I doubt, too much influence over him. He is from home more than usual, and when with us is thoughtful, and sometimes even melancholy.

Yet the same, if not a greater degree of tender regard is paid to Mrs. Herbert, whose eyes and looks shew her mind is not quite at ease. Perhaps he has been rallied for his domestic enjoyments. Ah! is it possible we should ever be ashamed of our happiness!—Miss Herbert is displeased, Mr. Berkeley dissatisfied, and we are all of us, I believe, discontented.

* * * * *

I have your's, and enjoy the hopes of soon seeing you in town; but surely you will stay longer than a fortnight. Resolve to become a woman of the world, and bring your husband to civilize him a little; for at present he is quite a rustic. What should keep you at home? You have no squallers, the horses can plough without you, the earth will bring forth its increase; and I would not have you return till it has put on its brightest livery.—Adieu, my dear. —Believe me to be your

sincerely affectionate
CLARA WOODFORD.

LETTER XXVII.

To Charles Herbert, Esq.

WHAT ails you, Herbert? What was the occasion of your precipitate retreat from company last night? Engaged for the evening, surrounded by a most agreeable party—music, dancing, every circumstance conspiring to exhilarate the spirits, and expand the heart! how could you, with the apathy of a Stoic, break from the engagement, and quit such society?

I saw you go out of the room, but I had no idea that you meant not to return.—The ladies suppose that your wife had fixed your time, and that you were afraid of transgressing.—If so, poor Herbert!—then you are fallen indeed!

Tell me the reason, the cause rather. I am, on the tiptoe of expectation,

your's,

WILTON.

LETTER XXVIII.

To Lord Wilton.

YOU are dissatisfied with my retreat, my Lord, and I fear you will despise my apology.—I was apprehensive of trusting myself any longer in the dangerous company to which you introduced me.—I saw through the character of the ladies whom you described as women of honour, of spirit, of fire, disposed to communicate pleasure, and enjoy life. My vanity was gratified, my senses were ensnared, but my heart and my reason revolted against the tendency of my feelings. I thought on my Caroline, on her virgin charms, on her conjugal attachment, on her unsullied purity, and the recollection raised a blush on my cheek.—I resolved to avoid temptation, and precipitately withdrew.

If, my Lord, you feel for me the friendship you profess, you will not excuse, but commend me.—The noblest office of friendship, is to invigorate the performance of duty. Be your's such, my Lord!—Such is the regard I feel for you. I will endeavour to break the ties of every dangerous connection, but shall ever be

your Lordship's sincere friend.
CHARLES HERBERT.

LETTER XXIX.

To Miss Herbert.

O MY dear Miss Herbert, reports have reached this place, in regard to your brother.—Surely they cannot be true!—My child cannot be less dear to the man who seemed to live only for her;—yet a mother's fears are ever awake. Perhaps I unnecessarily torment myself.—From you, my dear, I request an immediate explanation.—My son, though free from that rashness of disposition, which often precipitates into vice, and though he loves Mr. Herbert, not only as a brother, but as a friend, is not a proper person to be consulted on this occasion.—I dare not solicit my daughter to remove my doubts.—Her principles will not permit her to accuse a husband even to a tender parent.

When I parted from my Caroline, I requested that she would write to me every week, and that she would communicate to me every circumstance that happened.—A request, which appeared to be unnecessary to so dutiful and affectionate a child, but which was dictated by the fondness of a tender parent.—She promised, and for some time complied with that promise.—Indeed she has never failed to write; * but her letters are short. They contain nothing to relieve, nor perhaps to realize my fears.

I intreat you, Miss Herbert, to answer me sincerely, or, notwithstanding the inconvenience my health has always suffered in London, I will undertake the journey.—Whatever be the result of my enquiry, I shall be easier than under this cruel suspense.

I am, my dear,
your affectionate
ELIZABETH BERKELEY.

* Some letters are omitted from Mrs. Herbert to her mother

LETTER XXX.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

WOULD to Heaven, my dear madam, it was in my power to remove your uneasiness!—As you earnestly desire an answer, and your presence here would only add to distress, I must unwillingly confirm the disagreeable reports with which you have been afflicted.—Yet perhaps my brother is more deceived than criminal.

Never did any man appear more truly excellent till within the last few months.—Never did any man feel more strongly the influence of love and esteem.—Never was any woman more deserving than my sister of both.—He cannot cease to love and esteem her, nor be lost to the principles with which his mind was early imbued; yet I am afraid these sentiments have not been able to preserve him from the infection of bad example.

He has renewed an intimacy with a Lord Wilton—a wretch, whose specious appearance must have deceived my brother into an opinion that he is worthy of his friendship.—His unsuspecting confidence will be an endless source of remorse to him, and occasion lasting uneasiness to his friends. How far it has betrayed him I know not, but Mr. Berkeley's and my remonstrances have been hitherto ineffectual to break off the acquaintance.

My sister's charms, I really believe, have captivated this vile Wilton's heart. His attentions have been distressing to her. Her unaffected indifference to all his fine speeches, her unremitting sedulity to please my brother, (yet these sedulities, "not obvious, not obtrusive,") convinced his Lordship, I suppose, of the folly of his attempts.—Probably he revenges himself on her cruelty by withdrawing her husband, or perhaps he flatters himself that my brother's deviations will in time warp her from duty.—But her conduct is so nobly uniform, it must destroy every presumptuous hope.—Dear creature! she pines in secret, and endeavours to assume an appearance of cheerfulness, whilst her looks convey a faithful representation of her mind.

Notwithstanding our friendship, she has never uttered a reproachful word of my brother. Even to you I find she has not disclosed her uneasiness. I admire, I reverence those virtues which I should be incapable of practising. My temper, naturally impetuous, would, on such an occasion, have hurried me into excesses my reason would have condemned, and which might have produced fatal effects.

I own I have upbraided my brother—perhaps too severely—at least my sister's tenderness would certainly deem all expostulation to be severity.—But I cannot bear such excellence should suffer; yet let me not, madam, add to your affliction, but permit me to open a prospect of relief.—Rely on the goodness of my brother's heart, and his love for your Caroline. A false shame may deter him from a confession of his fault:—my reproaches may have irritated, instead of convincing him: I will not think he dare indulge an idea that my sister knew I meant to arraign his conduct.—He must be more sensible of her virtues than to entertain such a suspicion.—Had I imitated her example, his reformation might have been sooner effected. I condemn my hasty, impertinent zeal. I will endeavour to gain my sister's confidence. I will, like her, attempt to reclaim by sweetness. Mr. Berkeley's influence may be still successful. You shall soon receive

another letter from me, and I will write to you constantly.—Let me beg, dear madam, you will not mention to the gentle sufferer the information I have given you: but I beg pardon for the suggestion.

Excuse my freedom, and regard only the good intention that actuates
your ever devoted and faithful
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER XXXI.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

IT is only to you, dear madam, that I will convey the overflowings of my heart.—When I had finished my letter, I went up to my sister's dressing room. Little Charles lay asleep on her lap; her eyes were intently fixed on him, and the tears stole silently down her cheeks.

I shut the door.—I softly approached her with the reverential awe due to a superior being. She heard not my step, but started at the sound of my voice. I could not restrain my emotions on a scene so affecting; I clasped my arms about her;—a look of self-reproach upbraided my intrusion.

“Ah! my dear sister,” cried I, “what is the occasion of these tears? And why are you so unkind as to weep alone?—The penetrating eye of friendship has long observed your uneasiness. Tell me, my beloved Caroline”—

A fine glow overspread her sweet face: she gently put me from her.—“I have nothing to impart, my Lucy,” said she; a smile faintly dimpled her cheek; her averted eye betrayed what her words attempted to conceal.

“Now, my sister,” replied I, “you wound me by your reserve,—my brother is unkind,—he has lost his relish for virtue. He is unworthy of you.—I pity you from my soul, and I must seek and upbraid him for being the cause of such uneasiness.”

I was going, when she hastily pulled me back; “Ah! my Lucy,” said she, “how severe you are! Dear, unhappy, mistaken man, he is more to be pitied than condemned.—What must he suffer! O that wretch Lord Wilton! I date the commencement of my misery from the renewal of that acquaintance: yet, my sister, be not precipitate in your conclusions. I think I could answer for him with my life, that he is free from actual guilt. His heart, his esteem are still mine. That his inclinations have wandered, alas! I doubt not. Consider the frailty of human nature; consider the company into which Lord Wilton allures him;—yet Mr. Herbert's principles will, I hope, preserve, or soon restore him.”

She wrung her clasped hands. She shed a flood of tears; then raising her fine eyes, she seemed to supplicate for her child the protection of Heaven, while the sweet babe, insensible of her grief, lay smiling upon her lap.

I was unable to answer; and she added, “I know not what I ought to do—but I am determined never to reproach him. Have I ever discovered any tendency to a suspicious temper? I would not have him imagine I am uneasy, lest he should, with too much severity, accuse himself.”

I could not forbear exclaiming, “Excellent woman! he is unworthy of such tender solicitude.”—“Ah! my dear,” answered she, “there are times when human nature is more liable than at others, to be overcome by temptations. And, alas! the manners of the age are dangerous. We have escaped his trials, but we have no reason to conclude, that under similar circumstances, we should have superior strength for conquest. His deviation proves that constant vigilance, unremitted attentions, are requisite to support the best principles.”

“Your conduct,” answered I, “displays the brightest example to our sex.—I am amazed at your fortitude. I have seen you receive my brother with a face veiled in the

sweetest smiles, whilst I am certain your heart bled from a painful sensibility! When he has caressed his little boy with a conscious glow, arising from reflections on his own abasement, your eyes have glistened with hope; yet how studiously have you avoided any particular attention to his behaviour!”

“Do not,” said she, blushing, “do not so highly praise a conduct, by which alone I could reasonably expect to regain my husband’s affections. Believe me, wandering inclinations will not be recalled by tears or reproaches. These will rather harden or fatigue, for compassion only will not sufficiently re-animate a heart susceptible of softer impressions, and which has in some measure lost its relish for the object which inspired them. He still esteems me; it is only by a conduct supported on Christian principles, I can hope to increase that esteem; and only by the tenderest unobtrusive attentions, I can endeavour, with any prospect of success, to re-kindle his inestimable affection.—Is there not some fault in me to justify this change? I wish him to think me amiable as well as estimable.”

“Fault!” interrupted I, “you are the brightest mirror of perfection. I cannot bear you should have any doubts of yourself. He only is blameable, and deserves reproach. Indeed, indeed, you are absolutely faultless.”

“You are much too partial,” said she; “yet my heart acquits me of a thought injurious to my love or virtue.—But, ah! Lucy, why did you force me to explain the cause of my uneasiness? Had I chosen a confidant, I had not deserved to have found a friend: but to upbraid Mr. Herbert, to reproach him as you suggested.—O, my sister! how could you calmly intend to make him uneasy?”

“For *his* good—for *your* happiness,” cried I.—“His misery is the consequence of his degeneracy.”—“Do not give so harsh a name,” answered she, “to his deviation. Indeed, Lucy, you are too severe; his mind is fraught with every excellence. A pretended friend, dangerous connections, have drawn him aside from the path of duty; but, I hope, he will soon recover it.”

She paused, but soon resumed. “Would it be for his good, do you say, mildly to represent to him his danger? I think I can abstract self, and feel only for his present peace and future felicity? I know not how to support the thought that he should degrade himself to a lower degree of eternal happiness.—And O! to think that he may be snatched from the world in the commission of a fault, or whilst harbouring a criminal wish or intention!”

Tears prevented her farther utterance. I could not speak. I threw my arms around her; we mingled our tears. The sound of voices in the next room now interrupted us. My sister only added, pressing my hand, “Remember, my dear Lucy, you extorted from me a secret I never intended to divulge, and preserve it with inviolable caution.”

The entrance of the servant to acquaint us that company was below, prevented my answer. We endeavoured to adjust our looks, and went down. Soon after I retired to my chamber to give you this intelligence.

My sister is so dear to me, that I shall not taste of happiness till she enjoys it. May some method occur to you of restoring it, is the most fervent wish of,

dear madam,
your truly sympathising,
LUCIA HERBERT.

LETTER XXXII.

*To Miss Herbert.**Her second letter not received.*

Dear Miss Herbert,

IT is difficult to determine what situation will most contribute to our ease or happiness. I, who lately imagined suspense to be the most racking state, and hoped relief even from a certainty that my fears were just, am now convinced that painful suspense was less tormenting, than the dreadful explanation which succeeds it.

O, my dear, your letter pierced my soul. Is it possible? Can my child, the darling of my heart, the admiration and delight of all who beheld and conversed with her, can she be neglected by a husband to whom her merit must be most conspicuous? Who owes, perhaps, in a great measure to her those refined sentiments which I once fondly hoped would have invariably influenced his conduct.

How soon, alas! are all my flattering expectations vanished! perhaps I indulged too much the satisfaction of my heart!—perhaps I imagined my dear child placed above the reach of adversity. I thought her virtues secured her from tasting the bitter cup of affliction! Sad conviction of my error.

Forgive the effusions of a mother's despair, who finds the dear support of her life rendered miserable, by the unkindness of him, whose duty it is to protect and reward her virtue! What will become of that sweet babe (whose birth was the subject of our thankfulness, and the completion of our happiness) if his father dissipates fortune, health, and peace?—Short-sighted mortals!

How will my generous son, that tender brother, that affectionate friend, how will he support his sister's misery, his friend's degeneracy? Will not her sufferings awaken in him a resolution to revenge his wrongs, though on a person lately so dear to him?—Thought is dreadful—imagination distracts me!

Can you, my dear Miss Herbert, can you pity and excuse the tedious repetitions my griefs occasion?—My heart overflows—it will dictate to my pen its wretchedness.—But you will not blame me for indulging this transitory relief, nor think the expression of my fears the mere weakness of age.

Do not, my dear Miss Herbert, impart to my child your suspicions of her husband.—Do not betray her into a confession of unkindness. I know her so well, that were you to force from her an accusation of Mr. Herbert, she would despise herself as having been guilty of a breach of duty.

I am at a loss to know how to act. Suppose I write to him—suppose I mention the suggestions of the world, and assure him of the inviolable secrecy his wife has preserved. Shall I represent to him her wretchedness, made still more deplorable by that reserve which she thinks it her duty to support?

I will lay down my pen, and consider.

* * * * *

Your second letter, my dear Miss Herbert, was put into my hands, whilst I was revolving in my mind what conduct I ought to observe, in respect to your first.—I find I was too late in my cautions.—You have forced from her the fatal secret.—How I pity her distress! How I admire the noble conflict!—Tenderness for her unworthy husband combated with her desire of preserving his character—that character which he has forfeited?

How does he dare to slight the affection, which confers on him more honour than all his fancied endowments?—No, I will not write to him;—I am not calm enough—my daughter's happiness is too dear to me, to permit me to hazard the entire forfeiture of it; and indeed I am certain even her existence depends on her hopes of regaining his heart.

Inconsiderate, blind Herbert!—But I am writing to his sister, and, as I cannot forbear to mention him with the resentment of an injured mother, I will add only, on this subject, may God give him grace to repent!—For my dear daughter's sake I wish him repentance, and even for his own,—poor thoughtless man!—though he has destroyed the peace of his once fond mother, and your

ever affectionate Friend,
ELIZABETH BERKELEY.

LETTER XXXIII.

To Charles Herbert, Esq.

IF you can conquer that egregious sheepishness, which makes you dislike the conversation of fine and lovely women, because your wife does not relish, nor visit them;—of women, who are charmed with you; I shall meet you at Lady Hartley's this evening.

So handsome a fellow as you are, so uncommon an understanding as you possess, such talents for repartee, such accomplishments, how can you bury your person and abilities in a mere family intercourse.

You are prodigiously sententious, Herbert.—All sentiment is now exploded, not only from conversation, but from the stage.—Even Cumberland's concise manner contains, I think, too strong a dose of soporific. The world is become too wise to receive advice—it is pedantic to give it.—Mirth, jollity, love, liberty, constitute the business of life.

Mrs. Herbert is, to be sure, a very fine woman—a sensible woman, a good wife, a fond mother, &c. &c.,—vastly well; these are the requisites for a domestic character, but you would wish to be a man of the world, Charles;—to have eyes for other women besides your wife, and she has a very proper sense of the submission becoming a wife. You tell me, she never attempts to confine you; she wishes you to please yourself. What the deuce makes the man so squeamish? She can work, and read, and write, and nurse, without you.

Come then, prithee meet me this evening, or I shall take it unkindly. I should have called on you, but I am beset with a parcel of unmeaning sycophants.

Your's most sincerely,
WILTON.

LETTER XXXIV.

To Lord Wilton.

YOU rally me, my Lord—you know my attachment to you, and your power over me, and you use it unmercifully.—You flatter me by ascribing to me superior abilities, yet tempt me to misapply them.—You have praised my heart. Why do you wish to mislead it? You laugh at me for sentiment and principle. But alas! the sentiments you attribute to me are not actuating principles? I have failed, not from the inefficacy of principle, but from my own irresolution, and want of exertion.

You do not render justice to the most amiable and excellent of her sex.—Yes, my Lord, I dare to assert that Mrs. Herbert, my wife, is one of the most amiable, and excellent of her sex.—“A fine woman, a sensible woman, a good wife, a fond mother.” I have eyes for others, but I have a heart only for her. Her soul retains the image of its Creator. The brightness of her character has hitherto irradiated my path.

She has been the pole star of my conduct. Would to God she were still so! and that I were not benighted in the gloom of error.

Your description of her is cold and unanimated—it is applicable to many valuable women, but it is too faint for the delineation of my Caroline—I feel the influence of her perfections, but I feel also a degrading consciousness of my own demerits. Shall I then blush at hearing the senseless ridicule aimed at a connection which ought to constitute the happiness and glory of a rational being? Let me rather blush at my own misconduct.

I choose, my Lord, rather to write to you than to meet you. I have met you, and your parties too often. I acknowledge the accomplishments of the ladies you mention: they are pleasing, they are captivating, but why do they spread their snares for a married man? and why does your Lordship aid them by your dangerous reinforcements? Can the conjugal knot be dissolved? My heart, and duty, answer no! My soul is still devoted to my Caroline, and let me endeavour to render every future action of my life, subservient to her happiness.

I have too long slumbered on the brink of a precipice. I am now awake, and, while my faculties are unclouded, let me renounce every dangerous connection. You may despise my weakness. I feel and lament it. I trusted too much to my own strength. With real sentiments of friendship,

I remain,
your Lordship's
sincerely devoted,
CHARLES HERBERT.

LETTER XXXV.

To Richard Brumpton, Esq.

I KNOW not what to make of Herbert. He is the most squeamish, sentimental mortal I ever met with. I invited him to be of our party at Lady Hartley's, but he sent me a refusal, with his rule of life in select sentences.

I can talk with him, when surrounded by a gay assembly, or I can laugh him out of countenance, when I have nothing to say; but the fellow draws his pen upon me, foils me desperately at this weapon, and quite disables me.

It must be upon the weakness of his resolution, or rather upon the milkiness of his disposition, that I must work.—A sad tale engages all his attention. I will introduce him to two seeming objects of compassion. William and Sally Marston, shall be the pretended sufferers:—reduced to indigence by the villainy of a guardian, who has escaped into another country.—I have not yet planned the whole of the story, but I can make it a deplorable one; and, lest he should suspect my design, I choose to have a brother sufferer as well as a sister.

The fellow is shrewd and suspicious—and so extremely attached to his wife.—I hate to hear her praises from his mouth or pen.—I must lower him—lessen his internal confidence. Pride he has none, for he is so foolish as to be unassuming, and even timid; but he preserves too much the dignity of action and character.

Come to me, Brumpton, and we will concert the means of debasing him. Come instantly.

Your's,
WILTON.

LETTER XXXVI.

To Mr. Berkeley.

My dear Son,

YOU will be, perhaps, surprised to find I am no stranger to Mr. Herbert's conduct. The reports I heard excited my apprehensions. I requested Miss Herbert to acquaint me with the truth. I dared not apply to you, fearing I might say too much on the affecting subject, and either add to the resentment you must feel, if the informations were just, or awaken suspicions to Mr. Herbert's prejudice, if they proved groundless.

You will pity my fears rather than be displeased with this effect of them; for, I find, I might have trusted you. Your moderation increases my love for you, whilst your ineffectual remonstrances with Mr. Herbert redouble my affliction—Persevere, my dear son, in that calmness, which I applaud.—Endeavour to restore him to your sister by mild expostulations. Remember his former exalted character; and that his weakness claims the support of friendship. Do not aggravate your sister's wrongs by an attempt to revenge them. I charge you on my blessing always to preserve that happy disposition which has hitherto been the guide of your actions.

Mr. Herbert is not an abandoned libertine. Example, and want of resolution, rather than inclination, have drawn him from the path of duty. My daughter's merit, your prudence, and his own principles, will restore him to virtue. He will soon despise the society in which he now delights, and himself for being capable of relishing their amusements. Believe me, he will suffer more pain from conviction of his delusion, and the miseries it has occasioned, than your reproaches can inflict.—I hope the happy time is not far distant when you will embrace the sincere penitent; and sooth his mind to a forgiveness of its own errors.—But I need say no more.—Your heart is your best monitor.

I hardly know whether grief for my daughter's affliction, or admiration of her virtues, is predominant in my breast. Both are inexpressible!—God grant I may never have occasion to renew this subject!—In your happiness, and my dear daughter's, is included that of

your ever affectionate mother,
ELIZABETH BERKELEY.

LETTER XXXVII.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

HOW strongly, dear madam, does the tenderness of the mother animate every line of your letter! I have long felt for my sister and myself. I now severely feel for you. What an interruption to that happiness, which I hoped would have been as permanent as it was perfect.—But, while I blame my brother's conduct, my heart is wounded by his sufferings.

He has renewed an acquaintance with a Lord Wilton. Captivated by his conversation, my unguarded friend too easily admitted him to his bosom.—Finding, I fear, by experience, that he had too precipitately engaged in an intimacy, he became dissatisfied and uneasy. Yet, instead of abandoning Wilton, he is only grown more cautious in mentioning him, and invites him less frequently to his house. His friendship for me seems to be cooled. He shuns my company. When we meet, his constrained looks convince me that he fears reproaches, which he is conscious of deserving; yet, fascinated by Lord Wilton, he cannot give up an acquaintance who has deprived him of his happiness. If I mention his Caroline, whose exalted merit claims an eternal constancy, he joins me with heartfelt warmth; yet his blushes tacitly confess an humiliating consciousness. I have intreated him to avoid an intimacy with Lord Wilton, and by degrees to give up the acquaintance. That wretch is now out of town with a sick uncle, from whom he has great expectations. I begged my brother would determine to see him no more; but he enjoined me silence. He cannot defend, he tells me, every particular of Lord Wilton's character, but he has obligations to him which he must conceal, and which prevent his declining the acquaintance. What can these obligations be? My anxiety is equal to my friendship for him, and affection to my sister.

Every face in the family is changed, and every heart is engrossed by some uneasiness which it attempts to conceal.—My sister, my amiable sister, shews only by her altered looks the disorder of her mind.—In her, the tender wife, the fond mother, suffers!

Miss Herbert is deeply interested in the cause of friendship. She feels for the anxiety of the wife, the anguish of the mother. She condemns the infatuation, whilst she pities the weakness of the husband, but, I believe, her compassion and admiration of her sister, excite stronger emotions of resentment towards her brother than pity for his self-inflicted sufferings can subdue.

Miss Woodford (I scarcely dare to call her my Clara) is also altered.—That easy frankness, which heightened my esteem, though it did not perfectly satisfy my love, seems to have given place to a gloomy fretfulness.—But we are involved in one general calamity.

Be not apprehensive, dear madam, that passion should prompt me to revenge my sister, nor that even love can render me insensible to the dictates of friendship. I know, I pity Mr. Herbert.—Yes, I am convinced with you, that much more severe must be the anguish he feels on reflection, than that which he inflicts. I will endeavour to regain him by such methods only as your goodness advises.

Comfort yourself, dearest madam, by indulging that favourable opinion you wish to inspire in me.—My sister's cause is the cause of heaven, and her triumph will be aided by its assistance. Trust me, this superior instance of her virtue will more firmly cement their union.

Be assured, that, whatever be our situation, nothing can weaken the duty and affection of

your ever obedient,
and gratefully affectionate son,
HENRY BERKELEY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

To Richard Brumpton, Esq.

COULD you have imagined, Brumpton, that a fellow so lively, so attached to pleasure as I am, could support a tedious confinement in the sick room of an old wretch, whose recovery I dread, and whom I wish at rest in his grave? But you know my inducement.—His lands, tenements, and hereditaments, will amply repay my attendance. The farce is almost over. The last scene is opened to my view, and the curtain will soon drop.

By my faith, Brumpton, it will be some time, I doubt, before the risible muscles of my face will be capable of resuming their functions; yet I have a happy facility in adapting my appearance to persons and times. My uncle thinks me a saint; I fear, if he is destined to be one in Heaven, he will have a very different opinion of his nephew. I could hasten his last moment, by acquainting him with my real character, and the swift circulation I shall make of those pretty pieces he has been so long collecting—but that would be dangerous work, ha! Dick.—I have often thought it a happy circumstance that the old Don lives so far from London. He would else hear strange stories of his kinsman—little akin, I doubt, in heart.

Prithee, good Captain, take care of Herbert; let me not lose my prey;—the fellow deserves to suffer for his romantic confidence. Who but himself would have permitted so charming a creature as his wife, to be frequently seen by a hare-um-scare-um Lord, mad in the pursuit of pleasure?

You will say he did not thoroughly know my character. Character, simpleton! People seldom have occasion to make enquiries of noblemen at my time of life. Surely I am not worse than most of my age and rank. Do you think I am? That's some comfort, Dick! though, I doubt, that excuse would be insufficient with my uncle—hardly do, I fancy. But I shall reform some time hence.

Hark ye, Brumpton! let not Herbert be much at home—haunt him; suffer him not to see his wife if possible; for I am terribly afraid my absence may prove destructive to my hopes. I believe he loves me.—That rencounter at Sally's lodgings, in which I appeared to be his protector against an unequal assault, I think has secured him. Yet how bitterly did he lament being seduced by that artful girl! how did she work upon his unsuspecting confidence! He even wept at her narration; and his pity led him into the snare I had prepared to awaken his passions.

But never will he forgive himself—and, if he knew the use I intend to make of his conduct, he never could forgive me.

He was ashamed to see his wife.—The society, into which I introduced him, diverted, in some measure, his attention from thoughts that almost distracted him.—The longer he continues in this course of life, the more difficult it will be to break the chain, which unites him to us.

This from you, Wilton! methinks I hear you say. Even so, Brumpton. I am not blind to reason, though she casts but a dim light into my breast. Pleasure, my boy, pleasure is my goddess! I have long bowed before her shrine, and she has not a more

obsequious votary. I cannot say she has sufficiently repaid my adorations, but hope enlivens me, and even disappointment cannot wholly dispirit me.

This woman, this beautiful, this enchanting Caroline, has occasioned me more uneasy moments than I ever felt before—she certainly thinks not so well of me as her husband does—a cold civility has been the best reception I ever experienced from her, but of late she deprives me even of this, and leaves the room immediately on my entrance.

I cannot bear it, Dick.—I, who doat upon the sex, to be treated in this manner by one whom I prefer to all the rest! She is almost the only female who has mortified my vanity. My conquests are indeed, in general, too easy. I have not the pleasure of surmounting a difficulty.—Mrs. Herbert seems to promise me much trouble; but I care not, if I can at last prove successful.

She loves her husband, you say; but can he love this most admirable woman? When I mention the charms of her person, he launches out in praises of the beauties of her mind.—When I admire the easy politeness of her behaviour, he cries, O! she is of an angelic disposition.—Her mind, indeed! give me her person, and I am satisfied.—He once told me, my description of her was cold and unanimated.—He little thinks how much I endeavoured to smother the warmth that glowed in my heart, to prevent its flaming to my pen.

Her disposition too! she is not of that pliable temper I wish her to be—yet, faith, I know not whether I could adore an inanimate symmetry of form; and perhaps to that sweetness which smiles upon her features, they may owe a great part of their enchanting loveliness. Shall I rob her of her most engaging charm?

I know not whether I shall be able to subdue this haughty fair, but I cannot, will not resign my hopes. Besides, I have another scheme.—But you shall know nothing of it unless I succeed.

The old gentleman is awake, and calls me to him. Adieu! Captain. Remember your instructions, and acquit yourself of this commission in a manner that may entitle you to farther commands from your's,

WILTON.

LETTER XXXIX.

To Mrs. Berkeley.

Dear Madam,
I CAN readily allow for the first emotions of your resentment against my wretched brother. We continue in much the same unhappy way.

Miss Woodford has left us for a few weeks, and is gone to her cousin Bennet. My beloved sister and I mingle our tears, but reproaches are all my own. She trusts in that all-gracious Being who never deserts the innocent, and who will recompense the sufferings which he permits. Her soul rises superior to its woes, while hope opens to her a prospect of everlasting happiness. Human nature must feel, but Christianity triumphs. You, my dear madam, enjoy the same resources which your Caroline draws from this fountain of life.

May my poor deceived brother derive benefit and consolation from those principles, by which now, alas! he ceases to be actuated, that we may become as happy by his reformation as we are now made miserable by his deviation.

I am,
dear madam,
most respectfully and affectionately
your's,
LUCIA HERBERT.

END OF VOL. I.

London: Printed by W. Bulmer and Co.
Cleveland-row, St. James's.