The Miser Married

Catherine Hutton

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Catherine Hutton

Dedication

TO MY FATHER

My beloved and respected Father.

To you from whom I inherit the Faculties which have enabled me to compose a Book; to whose Industry I am indebted for the Means of Leisure; and by whose Kindness I am permitted to enjoy it; do I dedicate that Book, as I have dedicated my life.

Of your Talents, which have broken through the Fetters of Ignorance, I will say nothing. They are before the World; and the World has judged favourably of them. Of your Conduct, I may be allowed to say, that its Tenor is Independence, for yourself; and unlimited Indulgence, to all around you. I trust mine has proved that I am not insensible of the Blessing.

To you it is unnecessary; but, in this place, it is proper to add, that

I am,

Your most grateful and Affectionate Daughter,

CATHERINE HUTTON.

Birmingham,
May, 1st, 1813.

Preface.

To step forth at once, from the most impenetrable solitude, and present myself before the awful tribunal of the Public, is an effort so great, a transition so violent, that it agitates all my nerves, and, for the present, murders sleep.

My skill in the composition of various sorts of puddings has never been questioned: my epistolary talents have been commended by my few correspondents, and not denied by myself: but that I possessed the inherent qualities necessary to write a book, was not suspected by me, till lately.

I had been reading a celebrated Novel, written by a celebrated Lady, which appeared to me of that kind called prose run mad. Beauty, sentiment and description, rose to such a pitch, that their effect was reversed. What should have excited admiration, became burlesque; and I found myself obliged to laugh, where it was intended I should have wept. Surely, said I, as I laid down the book, Surely *I* could write as well as this! I tried, and believed I had not been mistaken.

To solicit the favour of the Public, would be to doubt its justice. To the first I make no claim. On the latter I have the most firm reliance, and to that I submit.

Letter 1. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Winterdale, Feb. 15, 1812.

I hope you get on with business. Tell the rascals I will not abate them a farthing. Because their fathers and grandfathers had the lands for nothing, I suppose they will think it an infringement on their rights to be made to pay for them. If it had not been for this unlucky hurt on my foot, I would have played the devil with them myself. No man can doubt your honesty: I only fear your resolution. Remember, however, I delegate my devilship to you, and do not forget to use it.

I am miserable without you. Nothing goes right. Mr. Clodpole is the most cursed awkward, fellow that ever existed, both about one's person and one's business. I wonder you, who have lived with me more than nineteen years, and scarcely ever left me a day, could not give him some better instructions. When he puts on my coat, he dislocates my shoulders; and when he brushes it on my back, he labours as if he were rubbing down one of his horses.

1 have lived wholly on venison and poultry since you left me, because I would not trust Clod to go to market: and notwithstanding drumsticks, fag−ends of pasties, and nice pickings of bones, which have gone into the kitchen, he and Martha have smoaked one of the flitches of bacon. The dozen of wine you brought up will last me till you return; for though, at my usual allowance, they are calculated for only twenty−four days; yet, by saving a glass a day, I shall make them hold out a month. The key of the ale cellar plagues me more than all the rest, I carry it in my pocket; but I cannot draw ale myself; and, whenever Clod does, I am forced to stand on the cellar steps, to see that he does not drink at the cask.

My lawsuit with the fellow that cut the stick out of the hedge goes on well. Foreclose was here to−day, and says it will not cost me above fifty pounds; while it will cost him a hundred. That is some comfort, however.

My son is not yet arrived. He writes me word he wants thirty pounds, before he can leave Oxford. No doubt he does. He always wants thirty pounds: so do I; but I know the value of it, as well as he, and shall not part with it. I am sure his University education has cost me upwards of a hundred pounds a year, which is more than he will ever make of his latin and logic. The grand article of learning is pounds, shillings, and pence; and that he might have acquired at home.

The lady who has taken Ravenhill Lodge is come to it, with her family, which Martha tells me consists of a daughter and a niece. She says Mrs. Mereval is a handsome woman, not more than eight and thirty, and that the two girls are very beautiful. So they may be for me. I had a glance of two female figures, peeping through the lattice of the little door in the park wall, and I sent for the carpenter directly, to nail it up with boards. These women may, perhaps, think they have a right to be acquainted with me, because they chuse to come and live at the next house. I can tell them that will be no easy matter. As I have done going to church, I shall not know them; and if I pass their house I shall not look at it.

Write, as soon as you receive this, to

JOHN WINTERDALE.

Letter 2. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Winterdale, Feb. 15, 1812.

Dear Muster Mendall,

My master sed as I must put a letter in his franck; so I takes this hopertunity of letting you to know my sinsare good witches for your return back; for all the fatt has bin in the fire sense you have bin gon; and my master is so misdeemful that nothing can satisfy him. Our new nybers Mrs. Merriveal, and Miss Merriveal, and Miss Mobrey, and too lady's mades, and a footmon and a groom, and a cuck and howsmade com last wick to Raving ill loge; and verry fine fokes they be, Ile ashure you; purtickilurly the footman; for Ive only sin but him yet. For I gos won day to the Red Lyon, to fatch a pennath of barm, and thar I sid him, owt o livvry, and as smart, as yourself, but maybe a leetel younger. And Mrs. Tomson said, this is the squres how skipper; and so, says he, we shall be glad to see you at the loge, mame; and our ladies will be happy to wate of you at the hall, mame. Ah! says I, no sich luck, Ime afeard; for hour master wunnot let us have no sosity with nobody

Howsomever, I thot to myself, as they all knod I was the squrs howskiper, Ide furbitch myself up a bit, among sich fine fokes; and you knos as Ive gott tew very good silk gownds, only they be a litel ainchant; so I axed my master to let me have the mantimucker from the town, to halter um a bit; and, with some truebell he gen me leaf. So it happened as Ide made him a nice lite pudden o the Sundy, and hid nevr tuched it; a the Mundy Ide put it in the huvoon, and wormd it up again, and then he never tuched it; a the Tusday I cut it in slices, and warmd it afore the fire, and sent it in, for the third time, wich they say pays for all, and still it com back as it went; but, gad! it had lick to paid me; for, as hill luck wad have it, I gen it the mantemacker. 0 Lord! how did he starm, wen he axed for it a the Wensdy, and I told him hit was gon! I thot, to be shure, hid a gin me warning.

Poor Rafe is worser off nor I bin; for mastr dars not let him do nothin, for feard he shold cheat him. He darcent send him to markit, and so we has bin eatin o the baking flick, and mastar maks a nise at that; tho God he knows I has sent him in all the rodid, to his fowls and his turk keys.

I ha made his venson past tys o drippin, becos he allows me but a pond and a hafe o butter a wick. But I shod never a don, if I was to tell you hall; only I must tel you that I begd on him to gi me the keys o the silk dam usk rums, to set the winders open, and dust the cortins; and I has gin the copwebs a good dressin; but I thinks, in

anuther seven yere the beds will ware umselves out, and gee me no moor trubbel.

Rafe hav got aquinted with madam Mereveals groom, and he says he is a likely fellow. So no more at present from your wel wisher and feller sarvent till death,

MARTHA STABLE.

Letter 3. TO MR. WILLYAM MENDILL

Winterdeal, Febuary 15, 1812.

Reverint Cur,

Beein as how yo tot me to rite, an Misis Matther do soy hur wil put this here in her lettr as be gooin o the masters franc, I thinks it my dewty to let yo to no as I be wel, at this prison, blessid be God for it. But I wish to the Lord you was at whom; for mastr be so duberus that thar be no livin with him, an I conna doo nothin to plese him. God a marsi, a gentlemons vallets soy I, an lett me be vallett to mi hossis; for thoy be the koinder cattel o the tew, an the best to fettle. How yo hay manichd so mony yeres I doo not know; but a mi beside, from the hare on his yed to the strings on his shoos, I conna doo nuthin as be rite. I conna so mutch as eat rite, ecksepting Ide ete nothing; and I cona drinck write, wthout Id drink woter: but I may wurk mi fill. If I wos al honds an horms, an nevr a throte, I mut shoot him. By gosh! uf yo stoy long I wul goo too mi plow agen, an leav mi wage behint me.

To be suer misis mather be a gud old sole; but I shud not soy old, nyther, beein as how she do soy she be but fyve an thurti. But wee has bettr things nor she, uf a boddy darst to get at um: for Maddam Merrywool be comd to the lodg, an the grum hav tuck mc ther, and gid me a horn o rare stingo: and thre sich ladyce I nevr clapt my II on as maddam an the tew yong misis; beside a pratty gipsy of a hows made. But I hood not hay mastar to know, for no manderus thing; for the hows hood not hold us bothe.

The poore hosis has not had a note sins yo went; for I beleiv as mastr bee afeard I shod eat um miself, if so be as I cood gett at urn. Carlo be wel, an sends his lov; he wunna foller noboddy but me, now yo has laft him: wich be all at prisont from yores to come and

RALPH RUSSETTING.

**** As the writers of the foregoing letters were totally ignorant of the art of punctuation, the editor has added the proper stops, to make them intelligible.*

Letter 4. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Winterdale, Feb. 21, 1812

I am glad to hear you have acquitted yourself so well upon the whole; though I do not approve of your engaging for the repairs of Jackson's house. The fellow, and his father before him, wore it out. Why not mend it? I never destroyed a beam or rafter of it; and it is cursed hard my purse should suffer for those that did. You did right to refuse the lease. I will grant none. Though, if the scoundrels behave well, myself being judge of their behaviour, I shall not raise their rents of seven years.

If Taylor scruples to give the rent I have asked for his farm, put it up by auction; for I will not lower it for his nine children. I was not the cause of his children coming into the world. If he was, it is his to provide for them. The same by Smith; his sheep have had the rot, and he wants me to throw him back a sum of money. Why does not he

ask God Almighty for money, who sent the rot, if he did not bring it himself, by neglecting to drain his pastures. I have lived long enough in the world to see that if a man has a little money; that is, a little prudence, he may take upon himself the office of God Almighty, and repair all the evils that the sloth, improvidence, and extravagance of mankind bring upon themselves. Who do I ask to give me money? or even to lend it? Let them *go and do likewise,* and we shall not trouble one another.

Bring all the guineas you can. When I have made the thirty−two thousand in the iron chest, fifty thousand, I shall be content. But, what with former subsidies, and present exporters and melting pots, I fear that will not be easily done. Government should make every guinea pass for thirty shillings, which would bring out my hoard and many another, and keep them in circulation, when they were out. I hate their flimsy paper.

Elrington's huntsman and hounds have been through the paddock where the wood and kids are piled, in pursuit of a hare. They have broken down the fence, which I shall make him pay for. I have entered an action against him, and shall recover damages.

For once, I shall take your advice, and will send Henry the thirty pounds he asks for; but I will delay it a week, that the expences of this week may be included in the sum. I hope he will be a prudent lad, when he comes home; for I am sure he has hitherto been a very expensive one.

I had the misfortune, yesterday, at a sudden turn of the road, to burst full in the faces of a couple of young girls, who, I suppose, by their slender figures, and thin white drapery, are the young women at the Lodge. I could not help looking at them, before I recollected myself; but I took no notice of them, and hope I shall be more upon my guard, if I meet them again. Such people as these may not want money; but they may want a haunch of venison, or a basket of grapes, or a house to gossip at; and I do not want company.

I am heartily glad you come home next week. Hob is a novice at every thing, except cramming his stomach; and he is made of stuff that will not mend. Your services, and the money you bring, will be almost equally welcome to

JOHN WINTERDALE

Letter 5. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, Feb. 2, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

I acknowledge my promise to write to you once a week, and with pleasure I now begin to perform it; for, besides my friendship for you; besides my hope of hearing of dear, lost, bewitching London; I feel I shall want something to do that most dreadful of all wants, except the want of bread! Where are you now? In a crowded assembly at a ball admired, and wanting nothing. While I am sitting alone, by my dressing−room fire, and my bed candle, already, perhaps forgotten by that world I cannot forget.

At such a time too! If houses in the country must be entered upon at Candlemas, why did not the makers of Candlemas place it in July, when London is a skeleton, and shady groves and purling streams are delicious? Now, my partner is dancing with, and my admirer is flattering another woman. Well! be it so. It is my daily prayer to my heavenly Father that his will be done, and I submit to it; though it is certainly not my will. But I am growing serious; so I will give you our promised history.

My father, as you may have heard, was gay and magnificent. His fine estate was unequal to his expences, and he left it in debt. Still, as I am his sole heiress, I was accounted rich; and so I accounted myself; till circumstances

that have arisen lately have occasioned some doubts.

A distant relation, who went to India an age ago, and whose very existence was forgotten, arrived in England, some time since; and, finding Sir George Montgomery was dead, without a male heir, assumed the title; and, what is a great deal worse for me, he fancies he has a right to the estate. This notion of his he has communicated to the gentlemen of the law, and God only knows what will be the event. In the mean time, the only indisputable part of our fortune is my mother's jointure, during her life, and such personal property as my father left behind him.

My mother, who brought Sir George nothing but her beauty, has a jointure of only one thousand pounds a year. My guardians have allowed her five hundred pounds a year, for my board and education. But you must be sensible that the style in which we have lived could not be supported upon an income of fifteen hundred pounds. Shall I confess it? We have run into debt! deeply in debt! a circumstance never to be justified! It can only be palliated by observing that when I came of age, and consequently into the possession of my father's patrimony, of which I want only fourteen months, I could, and should have paid all.

I might lay the whole blame upon Lady Montgomery, whose habits of expense have always exceeded her prudent resolutions, and say that, girl as I was, she should not have permitted me to tax my future fortune; but I will own that, borne along on the tide of dissipation, I was willing enough, myself, to pay the penalty. The chance of losing my fortune, and of even being obliged to refund the income that has been allowed me, out of the estate, has brought us both to our senses. My mother has sold her equipage and splendid furniture, and dismissed all her servants, with the exception of Horton, her own maid. We have packed her up with us, in a post chaise, and are gone, privately, nobody knows whither, and nobody is to know whither, but yourself, and two other persons, Mr. Mountney, our solicitor and my cousin Miss Mowbray. You will perceive the importance of the secret intrusted to you, and guard it with the utmost care.

Mr. Mountney has taken a respectable house for us on the banks of the Wye. I have contrived to have my favourite horse sent after us; and my mother has hired a groom of the country. Not like a London groom, whose dress and manners his master is desirous to imitate; but a good, stout, rosy−faced hind, who, when he has dressed my horse, can handle a spade or a hoe, and dress our cabbages and potatoes. Two women servants, besides Horton, make up the remainder of our own establishment. I have now to introduce to you another part of our family.

I told you, before we left town, that Miss Mowbray, the daughter of a clergyman and my father's sister, both long since dead, having attained the age of twenty−one, and become her own mistress, had written to my mother, as the widow of her uncle, to ask if she would allow her to reside with us, and would bring her out into the world. On our sudden blight this sweet girl has consented to live with us and renounce the world. She joined us at Hereford, with a man and woman servant; and, as she pays my mother two hundred pounds a year for her own board, and fifty for each of her servants, she will be a pecuniary advantage to us: to say nothing of the advantage of her company; which I shall call a blessing, as I can think of no other word to express my sense of it. She is also a horse−woman, and has a couple of saddle−horses; so, with our dashing habits, and her man to attend us, we may yet alarm the banks of the Wye.

My cousin is all that is lovely in woman; tall, elegant, fair, beautiful, modest, unaffected, sensible, compassionate, and good−tempered. Perhaps you may be disposed to think I had rather have such a companion on the solitary banks of the Wye than in the gay crowds of London. I do not exactly know how far you may be right. That friendship cannot enter into competition with love, in the female bosom, I am ready to allow; but that it may be superior to vanity I will boldly assert. Let some one man, whom I may happen to love, prefer me to my cousin; and, though all others prefer her to me, I am content. I feel that my love of one man might surpass my love of woman; but my regard for twenty, or, if you please, the whole sex, would bow before it. In my cousin I seem to have a security that her one man and mine will not be the same person. Her timid, gentle, retiring manners may attract some shepherd beside a clear stream; while my laughing black eyes and open countenance may strike

some Captain with a smart cockade; whom I should certainly prefer to all the despairing swains in England.

In one point my cousin has a great advantage over me. Her mother's fortune, which was ten thousand pounds, descended to her, without addition or diminution; and, brought up in the family of a man of honour, her guardian; and within the pale of a country fire−side; it has greatly increased during her minority. She has acquired habits of regularity and economy; while I have been anticipating my future fortune wasting money not yet my own and, as it may now prove, never to be my own.

I hear you ask (for, as I cannot literally hear you, I make speeches for you) Are you not dreadfully uneasy, when it depends upon the breath of a Lord Chancellor whether you shall be a wealthy heiress, or, as the vulgar saying is, worse than nothing? Why, no; I do not feel a great disposition to be miserable. A chill runs through my bosom, now and then; but I always think of the maxim of some great old philosopher: There are two sorts of things you should never grieve at; those you can help, and those you cannot help. The reasons for both are obvious. If it seem good to the Lord Chancellor that I should inherit my father's land, I shine out again. If he think a stranger have a better title to it than I, I hide my head for ever. At any rate, we are learning wisdom; and, as these grave lords are seldom hasty in their decisions, the lesson may chance to leave a lasting impression. Besides, I consider the lillies of the field, how they grow. Like them, I can toil not, neither can I spin; and, like them, I hope to be provided for.

One word more, and I have done with this hateful subject, owing what I cannot pay: more hateful, far, than the loss of fortune, were it certain; for, of all feelings, that of having done wrong is the most insupportable. Concealment implies guilt. We have, indeed, been guilty. I must beg you to address your letters, not to your old friend, Charlotte Montgomery, but to your new acquaintance, though no less affectionate

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 6. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, Feb. 29, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

I will now give you our domesticals why not our domesticals, as well as your theatricals? The situation of our house is very fine; and, when nature shall have put on her mantle of green, it will be charming; but, at present, I own to you, that I think London smoke a better colour. We are on rising ground, and overlook almost the whole of a gentleman's park. Ha! say you, interrupting me, then you have a gentleman! Have patience; and let me go on. Well, as I was saying; beautiful lawns; venerable woods; noble lake; and as the orators of the hammer say, every thing corresponding. Again you interrupt me But where is the mansion? That, my dear, is a point I wish to be informed of, as well as yourself. I have not seen it. No soul alive has seen it; except its inhabitants, and the few persons who are obliged to go to it upon business. The great gates are barred within side; the porter's lodge is shut up; the park is surrounded by a wall, higher than a man on horseback; and the only access to the place is by a door in the wall, that a man on horseback can just pass through. Till lately, the upper part of this was lattice; but, as Eleanor Mowbray and myself were looking through it, when we first came, we accidentally got a peep at the owner, and the next day we found it boarded up. I dare say the man thinks himself very unfortunate in having a neighbour; especially one who, if he looks out of his windows, cannot avoid looking into his park! The house, fronting the other way, and being half surrounded with wood, is not visible to us, or any living creature, except the birds that fly over it.

We had the happiness of meeting this gentleman one day, in a place where he could not shun us. He almost started at the sight of us, and looked like a man taken by surprize; but, recollecting himself, he fixed his eyes upon the

ground, determining, no doubt, that they should never see us more.

Mr. Winterdale, for that is his name, is a widower, about eight and forty years of age; rather under the middle size; thin, active, and looking pretty much like a gentleman. His features are not unhandsome. Their characteristic is melancholy and care. His eyes have great keenness and penetration. As I saw all this in a moment, I beg you will bestow great praise on my penetration: not as a regular physiognomist; a disciple of Lavater, learned in chins, lips, and noses; but as an adept in the general expression of the human face: and, as I think wé are more likely to reason wrong than to feel wrong, my conclusions may perhaps be as just, as those of any divine in Switzerland.

Mr. Winterdale has an only son, just coming from college. God grant I may be able to display my skill on his phiz, before it be long! *Phiz* strikes me as a very low word; and, I dare say, when it escaped my pen, it made the same impression upon you. I am wondering why! It is certainly derived from physiognomy, which is a noble word, and very much of a Grecian. It must be owned, however, that poor little *Phiz* has sadly degenerated from his father, by having lost four syllables of his stature.

Now, what a comfort might this Mr. Winterdale prove to us, if he were inclined to be sociable! He might even make up one of the necessaries of life, a rubber at whist. Three is a most awkward party.

Eleanor and I walk unmercifully, and ride manfully. We brave all weathers, except rain or snow. We play on the piano, and we play at backgammon. We drive our needles on at a surprising rate and should do so oftener, if we had any spur to our industry; but we need not make our own petticoats, and as for any fancy work to adorn our persons, to whom should we shew it, when finished?

We do sometimes, however,

With our needles create both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion;
Both warbling of one song, both in one key.

I have made a most unhappy quotation of Helena and Hermia: for, as if to refute my former argument, Lysander came in, and parted them. May I never know a Lysander that should part us!

But, my dear girl, I still want employment. What shall I do? something I will do; if it be to write a Dictionary or an Herbal; for nothing in the world is such hard work as doing of nothing. Apropos of an Herbal I will paint all the flowers of the field, and bind them into a huge folio. What a bright thought! In fine weather I will go hunting daisies and cowslips; and in bad weather I will make them bloom on paper. Thus am I prepared for all weathers I cannot do without an object. In town my object was amusement and admiration. So it shall be still. My amusement shall be collecting and perpetuating some of the most beautiful productions of nature; and I will admire them, instead of being admired myself.

My country air and exercise are not lost; for I already see a rosy tinge stealing over my cheeks. Eleanor brought her's along with her; and she may rejoice that we did not give her an opportunity to rub it off, in the midnight revels of London.

My mother does not so well accommodate her mind to her situation as myself. She is less flexible and too old to run after daisies. Accustomed for a longer time, to company and dissipation, she cannot so easily find resources around her, or within herself. She seeks no employment, and takes no exercise; but shuts herself up with Horton, in her dressing room, for hours together. What may be the subjects of their conversation, I cannot even guess.

To−morrow we go to church. It is nearly a mile distant, but we purpose to walk; my mother having, as you know, no other means of getting thither. Surely, we shall see somebody! Surely we shall get a bow from the Vicar! O,

that ever I should be fallen so low, should be so totally helpless, as to place my hopes on a bow from the Vicar! It is time to assure you that

I am truly your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL

Letter 7. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, March 7, 1812.

You tell me I am still remembered. Ah! Harriet, if I lose my Chancery suit, I shall be remembered only to be condemned. Never mind! my herbal goes on swimmingly! I have already copied the cold snow−drop, the golden crocus, the humble violet, and the stinging nettle; for I am determined to make drawing a moral business, and to remind myself of the bitters, as well as the sweets, of this mingled world.

On Sunday, as we intended, we went to church. The Vicar was so struck with our appearance, that it, more than once, puzzled his performance; and I do believe he thought of the bow I had bespoken at the end of it, when he ought to have been thinking of the lessons he was giving us.

The next day, imagining he was bound in honour to return our visit to his church, he called upon us in his carriage, accompanied by his wife. The long−tailed, slouch−headed beasts were taken from the plough, for the occasion: and the lank−haired ploughboy lost half his day's work to drive them. The parson is fat, coarse, and vulgar; and his lady more fat, more coarse, and intended by nature to be more vulgar; but she has happily surmounted the obstacles which nature threw in the way of her being elegant and polite.

Our interesting visitors began by assuring us that they had taken the first opportunity of waiting upon us, and hoped we should be very good neighbours. Indeed, ma'am, said the lady, addressing herself to my mother, this *here* is a very sad place but we will do all we can to make it agreeable to you. I dare say, by your *genteelness* you are a Londoner, and you will think it *wastly* dull,especially at first. I am a Londoner, myself, continued the lady, raising herself in her chair, and was always used to a *heap* of people, till I married Mr. Thacker; and when I first came into the country, I thought it most monstrous stupid and *fartiguing.*

I was not born in London, said my mother, though I have lived a good deal in it; but I think this country very beautiful.

O, yes, rejoined Mrs. Thacker, the *prospecks* are *wery* pretty to be *sure;* but the neighbourhood is quite shocking. There is not a *creter* you can *wisit,* but *we.*

Pray, asked I, does nobody visit the gentleman that lives in yonder park?

Visit *him*! exclaimed Mr. Thacker. It is beneath any christian to enter his gates, if he would let him!

Have you, then, who are the clergyman of his parish, no acquaintance with him, demanded my mother?

God forbid I should, answered the reverend gentleman.

God forbid, indeed, added the lady; for he's the *vorst* of all flesh!

Pray in what respect, asked my mother?

In every *respeck* in the *vorld,* replied Mrs. Thacker. In the first place, he was married to a sweet, beautiful *voman;* and he never let her rest, till he had broke her heart. In the second place, he has but one son, a *wery* fine clever young fellow, and he never has sixpence in his pocket. In the third place, he screws up all his tenants, and goes to law with all his neighbours. He even went to law with Mr. Thacker, here, about paying his tythes; and, since then, he never goes to church.

These accusations are truly shocking, said I.

O, dreadful, Ma'am, returned Mrs. Thacker! He has but one good property about him; and that is, he *will* pay his debts.

I felt the colour in my cheeks, and charity for my neighbour in my heart, at the same moment.

Does he shun society himself, asked my cousin? or does every body fly from him?

Both, replied Mrs. Thacker. He won't let any body enter his gates, but his lawyer: and nobody would go near him, if they might. He used to prowl about his park, like a mastiff; and watch if any body came; and ask them what business they had there; and so nobody dares to go anigh him.

Mr. Winterdale's singular habits are unfortunate for us, said my mother. We should have been glad of an agreeable neighbour so near us.

Monstrous unfortunate, indeed, said Mrs. Thacker. I should like an agreeable neighbour, myself, of all things; but, really there is not *a creter* one can notice: nothing but farmer's wives and daughters. I do send for two or three of them, sometimes; but, upon my word, they are so excessive I *wulgar* there's no bearing them. However, Ma'am, we shall always be *purdigious* happy to see you and the ladies; and so we must make it up to one another.

After a little more of the same kind of conversation, which, though not remarkable for its elegance, gave us some idea of the land we live in, the gentleman and lady took their leave.

I think, as my mother does, that we are unfortunate in our neighbours. When I found there were a hall and a parsonage at Winterdale, I hoped to have found two conversable families; but the one will not speak to us, and of the other's eloquence we shall soon be weary. There is still a fine, clever young fellow to come, however; though he is without sixpence in his pocket. I have some hopes of him; but I must not let them carry me too far; because perhaps, I may not have a sixpence in my own. He is come, but we have not seen him.

What a wretch is Mr. Winterdale, if this worthy couple say true! I would fain take off something from their report, on account of the suit about the tythes, as I understand Mr. Thacker bought the living, and he might possibly be desirous to reimburse himself a little too hastily; but I cannot hear one word in mitigation of Mr. Winterdale's offences. His estate is said to be more than six thousand pounds per annum: he is said to have upwards of thirty thousand guineas in his coffers; and his whole establishment consists of two men and one woman servant; besides a gardener and a keeper, who do not live in the house.

Mr. Winterdale's first man looks as much like a gentleman as his master. He has lived with him nearly twenty years, and strange to tell, has the good word and good wishes of every living soul, his master, himself, not excepted. He is house steward, and land steward; butler, and footman; valet, and purveyor. If ever his master does a good action, it is at the instigation of this man. His name is Mendall.

The second man has lived with Mr. Winterdale seven years. He is an honest rustic, who is groom, and man of all work, under the other. The woman servant is a staid maiden, verging upon forty, who goes by the name of

housekeeper; though she fills the different offices of cook, house−maid, and laundry−maid, in addition to that from which she receives her title. She has been with Mr. Winterdale fifteen years. The whole house is shut up; except two eating rooms; two sleeping rooms, for the father and son; and one, for each of the servants. These the poor woman cleans by stealth; as she can get her master out of the way.

If you ask from what source I have gained this information, I answer, from the only one whence it could possibly be derived from servants. Ralph, the rustic, has been several times at the lodge, and is very communicative over a glass of strong beer; though as much afraid, as if he were speaking treason. Eleanor and I sleep in the same room; and, when Robinson, her maid, attends us, she has entertained me with Ralph's narrations. This is not very honourable, you will say. But, my dear, if we will not allow a servant to talk, at the lodge, we can never hear any voices but our own.

There is something incomprehensible in the character of this Mr. Winterdale. A bad husband, and a bad father how can he be a good master? how can good servants live with him? wanting, too, as he is, in the point most essential, in their estimation; generosity? for generosity is with them what charity is with the whole species: it covers a multitude of sins. If the master be liberal, the servants not only feel the benefit; but they share the honour, and boast of his good deeds, as if they were their own. If he be parsimonious, they are not only losers; but they are ashamed of him, and participate in his disgrace. I cannot understand Mr. Winterdale, unless I saw him nearer.

The father of Mr. Thacker was a tallow chandler, in a country town, who, wishing to have his son a gentleman, brought him up to the church. By the time the son had obtained a curacy of forty pounds a year, the father was become a bankrupt; and forty pounds a year might have been the gentleman's income still, if he had not, luckily met with his present wife. Mrs. Thacker was the only child of a rich fishmonger in London, who died, and left her about ten thousand pounds. She came into the country, on a visit to her relations, and it happened that the kind stars of Mr. Thacker had placed him, as a boarder, in the same family. Miss Salmon was very desirous to be a lady. She gave up her title of fishmonger's daughter, for that of clergyman's wife; a part of her fortune was settled upon her; the other part was given to Mr. Winterdale, for her husband's induction to the vicarage of this place; and the lady has looked down upon the whole parish ever since. When she said that Mr. Winterdale was the worst of all flesh, it would have been in character to have added that he was an odd fish.

If you will not let Robinson talk, you must not let me write.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL

Letter 8. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, March 14, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

We went in a trio, to return the visit of our neighbours, the Thackers; and my mother has been prevailed upon by them, to take a step, which does not appear to me a very safe one; to go with them to an assembly at the next country town. I suppose the chances are a million to one that we shall not meet any person who has ever seen us before; but while that one was possible, I would have kept close in my covert. Between ourselves, I am a little afraid of my mother. I am convinced she leads a miserable, life, though she does not complain of it.

She catches at the very Thackers, rather than be without company, and looks forwards to her public *entrée* into a little country assembly with as much pleasure as I have heard her express at the *dejeuné* of a Duchess. Indeed it has set us all in motion; and be it known to you, Harriet, that Mr. Thacker is not the only gentleman of our party.

We found, at the Vicarage, a tall, straight, thin, very thin man, about twenty−six years of age, with hand some delicate features, a fair complexion, a hand like a lady's, and a squeaking voice, like nothing I ever heard before. This gentleman, Mr. Thacker introduced to us as his nephew.

Indeed, said Mrs. Thacker, I am purdigious happy that Mr. Sharp happened to come just now; for you know, Ma'am, addressing herself to my mother, though you and me might be *wery* good company for one another, yet young ladies like young gentlemen; and now we shall all be suited.

To suit us all, said Mr. Thacker, we should have one or two more gentlemen.

You gentlemen must have your joke, said his wife, but I don't know *vhere* you can find such another as Mr. Sharp. He's a real gentleman, ladies. He keeps his carriage, and does nothing in the *vorld*. His father, to be sure, was in business, but he got a hundred thousand pound; that's a plumb, as we say in London; and when he had given twenty thousand to his daughter, he had fourscore thousand to leave to his son; and if that is not enough to make a gentleman I don't know what is.

We congratulated Mr. Sharp on his good fortune; when he poured forth such a torrent of nonsense as I never heard in my life, I thought I would send you this and that speech, as he was chattering at the rate of ten loquacious chambermaids, but they were composed of such untangible stuff, that I could not retain them. I fear I can give you no idea of his elocution. Poor Mrs. Thacker could hardly find room to slide in a sentence, and her husband did not attempt it. At length. she raised her voice, and cried, I told you ladies, what good company Mr. Sharp was. It's impossible to be dull, when he's by. But you don't know half his *recommendations* yet: he sings like a *nightingirl*, and he dances like an *angil*.

O dear, aunt, now I wonder at you, said Mr. Sharp, How can you go to say so? I'm sure I *niver* pretend to sing at all, nor to dance neither. If *nubbody* had a better *vice* than I have, *nubbody* would *iver* sing. I'm sure its *enuqh* to frighten the crows, and if I was to go to sing, I'll be bound for it the ladies would all run away *frum* me.

There needs not your singing to accomplish that, thought I, if we were at liberty to run away.

Vell, Vell, said Mrs. Thacker, we shall get you some night, after supper, and then we'll call upon you, and then you shall call upon the ladies That's our *vay* in London, you know, Ma'am.

My mother said that Miss Mowbray and Miss Mereval would, with pleasure, contribute their share to the amusement of the company, at any time.

O law, Ma'am, cried Mr. Sharp, I'm always willing to *obleege* the company, *every think* in my power. I'll do my best; but as for singing so well as my aunt says I do, you must not expect any *sich* a thing, though I am sure I'm much *obleeged* to her for her good word; but when I come to go to sing before ladies, I am all over in a *trembleation*. But you must excuse it, I'll do as well as *iver* I can.

I was afraid Mr. Sharp was going to do as well as ever he could, at that moment; but Mrs. Thacker prevented him, saying, No, no, after supper's the time. We never sing in London till after supper. Besides, I've a *purposal* to make to the ladies here. We've a *wery* nice assembly in the next town, Ma'am, a *wery* pleasant meeting indeed, quite a *seleck* party. There's some folks one cannot notice, to be sure, but then one need not take any notice of them, you know. Mr. Thacker and I are susbscribers, and we shall be amazing happy *interduce* you and the ladies, if you will give us leave. The last night this season is next Thursday but one, and I shall be *wastly* proud to take

you in our carriage with Mr. Thacker and me; and I dare say, Mr. Sharp will be so obliging as to send for a *po shay*, for himseIf and the ladies. Won't you, Mr. Sharp?

O dear, yes, certainly replied Mr. Sharp, I am sure I would not *spile* an agreeable party for all the world. When you mentioned it yesterday, I was *heavaty queavaty*, and I thought I should like to go, and then I thought I shou1d not like to go; but to favour the ladies, I would not *hisitate* a minute: I would go any where in the world.

Then, said Mrs. Thacker, it's all settled. You have no objection, Mrs. Mereval?

Indeed, replied my mother, I do not know what to say to it. I came into the country with a resolution to go to no public place whatever.

O, Ma'am, said Mrs.. Thacker, this *here* is nothing at all: not like the great *concus* of people that you and me have been used to, in London: just a snug party of fifteen couple to dance, and two or three card tables; that's all.

Well, said my mother, I think we will venture to go.

I felt very uneasy, and said nothing.

But, continued my mother, you must give me leave to make a trifling alteration in your plan. You can take Mr. Sharp, and I will take charge of Miss Mowbray and Miss Mereval.

O dear Ma'am, said Mr. Sharp, before Mrs. Thacker could reply, pray don't deprive me of the pleasure of taking care of the young ladies. It will be the very *charmingest* thing in the world for me to take them in a post chaise; as for the expence, I'm sure I don't think *anythink* at all about it.

And you will be much better commodated in our carriage, added Mrs. Thacker. Them nasty *po shays* are *wery* horrid. Let the young folks put up with *them there inconweniences*.

But you know, Mrs. Thacker, said my mother, that in London we do not suffer young women to go out without a chaperone.

Mrs. Thacker seemed at a loss for a moment, and then cried, *Vell, vell*; as you please. *Them shoproons* are *wery* good things in London; but I thought we might do *wery vell vithout* them here, in the country.

Miss Mowbray, said Mr. Sharp, if your aunt is so cruel as not to give us leave to go together to the assembly, I hope you will allow me the happiness to have the honour to dance with you, when we get there. My aunt Thacker flatters me in saying that I am a good dancer. I hope you won't believe I am any *sich* a thing; for I know *nothink* at all of dancing: I only hop a little, sometimes, for my own amoosement; but I must own and confess that I think dancing the very delightfullest thing in all the world; and no pleasure can be *equil* to that of dancing with you.

I'm sure Miss Mowbray's much obliged to you, said Mrs. Thacker. She can have no objection to dance with you, added she, looking at Eleanor?

Certainly not, said Miss Mowbray, and bowed.

Though I was sorry for poor Eleanor, I could not help inwardly laughing at her vexation. The gentleman, to shew his politeness to his promised partner, attended us home. He talked to us the whole way, without ceasing; but, instead of endeavouring to recollect his conversation, I ought rather to apologize, for having already given you so much of his effeminate folly, and the bold vulgarity of his aunt.

But we have seen a being of a different mould. Only seen him, yet; but I mean to have him if I can. As Eleanor and I were walking along a path, leading through a beautiful wood, we saw, advancing towards us, a man such a man so handsome, so well made, so elegant; and, at the same time, so woe−begone that it could be no other than Mr. Henry Winterdale. His only ostensible companion was a fine spaniel dog; but his real companions seemed to be his own thoughts. Our path was narrow, and we passed him close. He looked at us, with evident surprize; but, instead of transferring his eyes to senseless stocks and stones, he fixed them upon us, and made us a respectful bow. He has not one lineament of his father in him. That I will venture to pronounce. Whoever his mother was, she has happily transmitted her beauties and graces, and, as I believe, her virtues, to her son. He owes nothing to his father, but his name.

Now, would not you think it a most extraordinary coincidence of circumstances, that we should meet the same gentleman, in the same spot, and at the same hour, the next day? nay, still more extraordinary, that we should have done so every day since? yet such is the fact. It is certainly the most attractive walk in the country, so we are under no temptation to change it, which is lucky enough; for, if we were to do so, it would almost look like breaking an appointment.

Tell me, will this nonpareil be at the assembly? Does he ever go to assemblies? Does he even go any where, without asking his father's leave? He looks noble and manly, surely he cannot descend to such tame submission as that! Ah! he has not sixpence in his pocket; an evil no person can contend with, except by such unworthy means as we have used! If he is at the assembly, however, he dances with me, that is certain; for Eleanor is engaged; and where can he find, on the banks of the Wye, two such damsels as Eleanor Mowbray, and

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 9. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, Mar. 21, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

Thursday evening found us all arrayed for the ball. With Eleanor and me simplicity was the word. We wore light embroidered muslins, sparingly adorned with lace; and my dark hair, and Eleanor's auburn, were fastened with a single comb. A set of cornelians for me, and of amber for her, were all our ornaments. My mother indulged herself with a few pearls, and looked charmingly. I sighed as I entered what Mrs. Thacker called The nasty po−shay.

We drove to the parsonage, and proceeded, in due form, to the assembly rooms, six miles distant; the commandant gentleman's carriage leading the van, and the subaltern post chaise bringing up the rear.

We found the company such as might have been expected, and such as were little likely to know us the clergy of the neighbourhood, with their families; and the lawyers and poticaries of the town, (which is not a small one) with their's. Trade finds no admission here; and these petty professors of divinity, law, and physic, are more anxious to exclude it,and more tenacious of their rank above it, than those would be, whom fortune has placed at a greater distance from it. But the distinction does not quite end here. Those whom Mrs. Thacker conceived it impossible to notice, were the refuse of the privileged professions.

We found the dress of the females, that of London almost caricatured; scantiness made more scanty, and waists flourishing in more than their accustomed length. Mrs. Thacker had, judiciously envelloped her capacious figure

in a rich rose−coloured satin; wisely imagining that an exact display of its proportions, would not be much in its favour. The men, instead of exceeding those in town, were far behind them. No groom−like appearance was affected here; no bang up coachman, or Bond−street lounger ever became the model of the place.

I amused myself with such observations as these, till I began to scrutinize the male part of the assembly, with a view to my own interest. This was contemptible; that I certainly could not dance with; and the other I was not quite sure whether I could dance with or no; till, in the midst of my reflections, I saw every bird of the air come and choose his mate, and I was left without any mate at all! Would you believe it? The whole company stood up for country dances; and myself, and two other forlorn girls, only, were left behind! I assure you, this produced a great revolution in my sentiments. Eleanor, whom I had pitied before, had got a partner that really did not dance amiss, and was dancing herself like one of the Graces: while I sat smiling, and talking to my mother and Mrs. Thacker, for fear people should think I was mortified. I looked with an eye of complacency at the contemptibles, and though this was very well; that was tolerable; and even the other might have done better than sitting still. I endeavoured to console myself with the idea that fear, alone, had prevented them from approaching me; but I could not help confessing that a little of their love would have been preferable to such fear.

Every time the door opened, I anxiously turned my eyes towards it, in search of Mr. Henry Winterdale. In the middle of the second dance I saw him enter. I now talked to my mother with more earnestness than ever, determined not to make the first advances, but expecting, every moment, he would find his way to me. No; I might have talked till now, before he had interrupted me. At length I looked for him; he was engaged in conversation, with some of the elderly men, who did not dance, and seemed quite unconscious that I was in the room. When I caught his eye, he bowed; but moved not from the place where he was standing. Well, thought I, I will not have you, however! You know, Harriet, I only promised to have him if I could.

At last, entered two officers, both well looking, but one of them the handsomest man I ever saw, with dark complexion, and very fine black eyes. How could it be possible that officers should not enter into my calculations, at a country assembly, when I know soldiers are so abundant in every country town? I can only account for it by my ideas being absorbed by creatures of another species. Now, thought I, I shall have my revenge. I cast a side−long glance at the two other unprovided−for Misses, and found they could not at all come into competition with your Charlotte. I saw, without seeming to see, the handsome officer go up to the master of the ceremonies, and, in a few minutes, they advanced together to the place where we were sitting. My heart beat with expectation. But how was I electrified when the master of the ceremonies said, that Captain Montgomery begged to have the honour of dancing with me. The Captain bowed, and I bowed, and he led me to the dancers. Who is Captain Montgomery? Undoubtedly there are many families of that name; but there is a possibility that he may be of my family! that he may even be the son of the Indian Montgomery, who claims my father's estate. O, how many possibilities are attached to this, that I dare not even think of! My mother, however, sees them all, and speaks of them without reserve.

We passed a most agreeable evening. My partner was all my utmost wishes could fancy; sensible, agreeable, animated, and attentive. His brother officer paired with one of the forsaken damsels, who, no doubt, congratulated herself upon having drawn a prize. The other, finding all hope extinguished, withdrew to overlook the card tables; for Mr. Henry Winterdale, the only disengaged young man in the room, did not choose to take compassion on her lonely situation. After walking and conversing for an hour or two with different parties, we saw him no more.

When the dancing was ended, our partners attended us to the carriage. I confess my vanity suffered in letting Captain Montgomery see what a carriage. But I comforted myself by reflecting that, if he had not danced with a lady of the post chaise, he might have been reduced to a nymph of the pattens; for, wrapped in pelisses, and armed with pattens, did both he and ourselves see many of the ladies, fighting their way home, through cold and dirt, with the assistance of their servant maids.

As Captain Montgomery handed in my mother, he asked her permission to wait upon her, the next day, to enquire after her health, and that of Miss Mereval and Miss Mowbray. You will imagine she granted it with pleasure.

Mr. Thacker's carriage led the way, as before. At first we followed close, but as their horses had in idea the comforts of their own stable, and our's considered that they were going from home, by degrees, we were left far behind.

We now discovered another reason for it; the post boy was so much intoxicated, that he bowed from side to side, in his dickey, and was utterly incapable of guiding either himself or his horses. Eleanor and I did not like our situation; but, as it was not in our power to mend it, we each, severally determined to be silent, and trust to the sagacity of the horses, and the protection of that Power which overlooks the actions both of men and beasts. At last, post−boy was thrown out of his seat, by a sudden jolt; my mother screamed; the horses were rightened, and set off. At that moment a gentleman ran up to their heads, stopped them; seized the reins, and stepped into the dickey. It was Mr. Henry Winterdale. Who, now, shall say that gentlemen should not learn to drive? Of all the arts invented by knights errant, of old, for the rescue of distressed damsels, who ever heard of driving a post−chaise?

Robert, my cousin's man, who was behind the carriage, and had been ignorant of our situation, till he heard my mother's scream, and found the horses running away, now jumped down, and came to the chaise door. Mr. Henry Winterdale desired him to go back and see whether the post−boy was hurt; and he soon returned with the agreeable tidings that he was safe. Mr. Henry then told us that he was at one of the windows of the inn in which the assembly−room was, when we set out, on our return; that he saw the incapacity of the post−boy, and had walked by the side of the chaise, in his way home, to be at hand, in case of accident; and that he would supply his place, if we would give him leave. We overwhelmed him with thanks, and not without reason; for we soon after passed a stone quarry, into which a very little irregularity in the horses might have precipitated us.

The post−boy was left to the care of Robert, who led him to a house to sober himself, till his chaise came back; and Mr. Henry Winterdale set us down in safety, at our own door. My mother hoped he would give her an opportunity to renew her thanks, at the Lodge. He replied that he was already overpaid by the pleasure of serving us; but that if he were so happy as to meet Miss Mereval and Miss Mowbray in their walks, he should rejoice to learn we had none of us suffered by our fright. He then wished us a good night.

The next morning our first visitors were Mrs Thacker and Mr. Sharp. The lady inquired how we liked our last night's amusement, and we all professed to be pleased with it. I told you said she, you would find it wasly pleasant. For my part, I'm wery sorry there's no more assemblies this winter; for it's the only time we can all meet together, and enjoy ourselves. But we stopped a minute at the door, after we got home, continued she, and we never see nothing at all of you.

My mother then related the accident which had detained us. O, Lord God, exclaimed Mrs. Thacker, How shocking! I told you what would come of them abominable po−shays; but you would not go with us!

O, dear, O, dear, cried Mr. Sharp, I niver heard the like in all my life! I'm glad I was not with you, for I am so debiliated with nervous disorders, that Ishould have been frightened out of my wits! I am sure I should have fainted; for I have fainted, several times, at a less thing than that!

I am very glad too, if that is the case; said I, for we should have been at a loss how to manage fainting gentlemen. We were more fortunate in meeting with one who could drive a pair of horses.

Well, said Mr. Sharp, now that, to me, is a very surprizing thing! I have often wondered how gentlemen, that have been brought up in dining−rooms, and drawing−rooms, and not in stables, could iver be so bold and venturesome as to drive horses! If I was to come to go to drive a horse, I should be all of a tremble! I keep a carriage, as well as other gentlemen; but I'm sure I had rather trust to a good stout coachman than myself.

You are a wise man, said I, for you know yourself.

Captain Montgomery was then announced. Mr. Sharp told him the story of our return from the assembly. He blamed himself exceedingly, for not having attended us home, and said he envied the gentleman who had rendered us the assistance.

Indeed, and so do not I, said Mr. Sharp! I should have been in the chaise myself, only Mrs. Mereval durst not trust me with the young ladies; and I am sure I should have squalled louder than she did! Nobody admires the ladies more than I do; but I had much rether dance with one of them than break my neck with her.

So had I, said the captain; but I should be glad to run any risk of breaking my own neck, to save her's.

Aye, but I could not have saved her's, any more than my own, if the horses would overturn the carriage, you know.

Not unless you could have done as the gentleman did; stopped them.

O, dear me, sir, that would have been impossible! What would have been my strength, against the strength of two great horses? I might as well have tried to move the church, as stop them. Why sir, when I only came to come to go down the dance, I was ready to drop!

If that is the case, sir, said Captain Montgomery, I pity you.

This last flower of Mr. Sharp's rhetoric reminds me of part of a speech said to have been delivered in a debating society in London. The matter in debate was, Which was the better to oil a man's wig with, honey, or mustard? The orator on the honey side of the question got up, and made his speech. The advocate for mustard then rose, and began with, For a man for to come, for to go, for to think, for to say, that honey is better to oil a man's wig with than mustard, is monstrous, absurd, and ridiculous, stupid and silly!

The conversation continued some time longer. Eleanor grew uneasy, and looked repeatedly at her watch. My mother observed it, and said, Charlotte, it is your time to walk: I

am sure Mrs. Thacker and these gentlemen will excuse you. We entertain no gentlemen, continued she; but we shall be happy to see either of you, for a morning call, as often as it is agreeable to yourselves. They both begged permission to accompany us, in our walk; and each attached himself to his former partner; Mrs. Thacker sometimes joining the first couple, and sometimes the second. I had every reason to be content with my companion: poor Eleanor was sad; and when we entered the wood, fixed her eyes on the end of the path, to see if our gallant knight had made his appearance. I had a glance of him, at the extremity of the wood; and so, I doubt not, had she; but he struck off into a different road, and deferred his enquiries whether we had suffered from our fright, till another opportunity.

Our hour of walking is again arrived, and Eleanor urges me to go. Patience, my dear I have only to tell Miss Castlemain that I am

Truly her's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 10. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, March 28, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

This week I have given to reading novels. Mr. Sharp sent his man to the town for a cargo of them, and, before he explored any of their contents, brought one to us. I took it up, and read it through. No matter what the name it is not worth remembering. It is strange how novels possess me! Though the characters are not marked; though the events are improbable; though the language is not even grammatical, I have no repose till I see the hero and heroine fairly married; and, for that reason, I seldom trust myself with a novel. Nor am I the only person under the influence of their magic spell. Our physician, in town, a very grave and learned man, and the author of a scientific work, once found me reading a novel; and acknowledged that he never ventured to begin one himself, as he should, assuredly, neglect his patients, till he had got to the end: and my mother was once in the library of the first philosopher the present age has produced; when observing the Arabian and Persian tales, and expressing some surprize at finding them in such a place, he told her he was particularly fond of them.

The second novel Mr. Sharp brought was Amelia Mansfield; translated from the French. I determined here to go on cautiously, and make reading only an interlude: but vain was my resolution. Once got into it, I stole it, while my mother was at breakfast, and watched her tea−cup, that I might restore it when she had done. I then took up my needle, and seemed busily employed; but the instant the book was out of her hands, down went the work. When I drew towards the end of the last volume, I made right give way to possession and carried it to our dressingroom, that I might indulge in all the luxury of woe. I had long foreseen that it could end only in death, or distraction. It is another Eloise, or another Werter. Great talents are necessary to write it; but it is great talents misapplied. Grave ladies would condemn the heroine, without mercy; and Mr. Sharp, who, by the bye, has no such thing as a heart, makes grimaces and says, Nastiest, rankest stuff that *iver* I read in all my life! It is certainly an improper picture of violent, uncontrouled passions; but, to me, it has another fault It is such a genuine representation of sensibility and distress, that, real or fictitious, it carries one with it, and wounds my heart. Could I have foreseen my sympathetic sufferings, I would have made no acquaintance with Amelia Mansfield.

I determined to read no more novels at present; and kept this resolution like the last. Mr. Sharp put one into my hands, which he assured me was what he called the very best and *entertainingest nuvel* that *iver* he read in all his life! Who, but must yield to such eloquence? I read it; and found his approbation would have been just, if it had been limited. It is a good novel; but I should wrong it, to say the best I ever read in my life. The idea is new; and the hero such a prodigy, that he lives through three volumes, without being in love. The title is Independence.

In the walk we took, after I had concluded my last, we met Mr. Henry Winterdale. He joined us, and walked with us an hour one of the pleasantest hours I ever spent. He is well informed on every subject, as far as my faculties of judging can decide, and is a man of great taste and feeling rather serious but who could be otherwise, with such a father? Whether he had his father in his head, I know not; I am sure I had him in mine; and fancied that, if we should chance to meet him, he would look upon us as the seducers of his son.

After this walk we saw Mr. Henry Winterdale no more, of several days; though, before it, we never missed him. We began to think we were like the maids that were held out for our imitation, in the nursery to be seen, and not be heard; and that he did not find our conversation equal to our appearance: but one day we were caught in a heavy shower where he sprang from, I know not he certainly was near; for, in a moment, he overtook us, and begged we would accept of his umbrella.

We would have declined it, on account of leaving its owner exposed to the rain; but he would not be denied. He attended us home; and, wet as he was, seemed to think the way too short; but he took leave of us at the door, saying he would now go and change his cloaths. Since then we have not seen him. He seems determined to render us every service in his power, and not to be acquainted with us.

Not so Captain Montgomery. He has been here three times this week; and says that nothing but the fear of being troublesome could have prevented him from coming every day. We yet know nothing of his family. Many artful girls would have led to the subject, and drawn from him all they desired to know; but it is not in my nature; nor dare I suffer my mother to do it, lest he should imagine she has some view regarding myself. That he distinguishes me from Eleanor is an undoubted fact; and that I do not feel so light−hearted as when I had nothing to do but gather snowdrops, is another.

Light or heavy, and at all times, your's is the heart of

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL

Letter 11. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, Apl. 4, 1812.

Which, my dear Harriet, in the catalogue of human events, do you think capable of bringing Mr. Winterdale to our house? not like Captain Montgomery, for a morning call, but a positive inmate; eating, drinking, and sleeping under our roof? You are mute with astonishment; at length you answer, A broken leg, perhaps. Your conjecture is exactly right. Mr. Winterdale had the misfortune to have his horse fall down with him, flat on one side; by which accident the leg that lay under the horse was broken: and he had the *good* fortune to have it happen just before our windows; by which situation he found help at hand. We saw the fall with terror. His own man, Mendall, was with him, and we sent out Robert to assist. They carried Mr. Winterdale into the house, in a state of insensibility, and laid him on a bed.

Now all was bustle. My mother and Mendall stationed themselves in the chamber, making every effort to recover the hurt man; Horton ran up and down stairs, to furnish them with the means; Robert was dispatched to the town, for all the surgeons he could find; Thomas was sent for Mr. Henry Winterdale; and Eleanor and I were ordering, and the women servants providing, whatever we judged might be of use.

Mr. Winterdale soon recovered his senses; being only stunned by the fall; but, as his first effort was to escape from the assistants, he discovered that his leg was broken. He then insisted upon being carried home. Here my mother interposed, with an air of authority, and said, indeed she could not suffer him to be moved, till she had heard the opinion of the surgeons; as she considered herself responsible for his safety at present; and Mendall joining her, he submitted.

When the surgeons arrived, they proposed setting the fractured limb immediately; as, if it were delayed, an inflammation must ensue, that would prevent it for some time. My mother was decidedly of the same opinion, and earnestly requested Mr. Winterdale to believe himself at home; assuring him that it would be a pleasure to her to supply all his wants. She then left him in the hands of the surgeons; assisted by his son, who had arrived some time before, and by Mendall. The operation performed, Mr. Winterdale was put to bed; where he has lain three days in a state of great suffering. He is now in a fair way. Mendall sleeps in the same room, and is generally with him in the day; Mr. Henry spends much much time with his father; and my mother, without sending to know whether she can be admitted, assumes the privilege of a nurse; and tapping at the door, enters, without ceremony; orders all things for the invalid; takes her post at his bed's head; and contributes, herself, to his comfort. This is the only way: for I do not believe there is written, in the book of fate, any method to become acquainted with Mr.

Winterdale, with his own consent.

Mr. Henry stepped into the breakfast−room, this morning, where Eleanor and I were sitting at work, and hearing that his father was better, and that my mother was with him, he ventured to sit down.

We are two to one, said I; are not you afraid we shall keep you prisoner?

One would be sufficient to do that, replied he.

Eleanor coloured, and worked very hard.

I think as Mr. Winterdale is likely to get well, continued I, that we are much obliged to his horse for breaking his leg; for I believe his two legs, if they had been whole, would never have brought him to our house; and then you would not have come of course, you know.

I know I should have been the sufferer, jf I had not, said he; and so much a sufferer, that, I believe, I should have broken through the savage resolution I had formed to deny myself the pleasure of your and Miss Mowbray's acquaintance.

Savage, indeed, cried I! I should not have supposed you capable of it, by your looks. Should you, Eleanor?

I should not suppose Mr. Henry Winterdale capable of doing what he thought wrong, said Eleanor.

It follows, then, said I, that Mr. Henry Winterdale thought it wrong to seek our society, or even to accept our invitations may I ask why?

Ah! Miss Mereval, said he, if you knew how I was situated, you would not ask why! But you cannot have been so long at the Lodge without having heard of some of the singularities of my father. You must know that he has renounced all society, and lives in a style very unsuitable to his rank; and though he has not verbally required such a sacrifice; yet, unless I could act consistently with my station in life, I think it better to conform to his plans.

If our parents are not all we could wish. said Eleanor, it cannot absolve us from the duty we owe them. I do not know a better rule for the regulation of our conduct, than to do right ourselves, and leave to others the pains and penalties of doing wrong.

I would make it my rule, said Henry. Happily for us, the right is easily discovered. In general, intuition, conscience, or by what other name you please to call it, will point it out, before reason is asked. The only difficulty lies in pursuing what is right, when passion or interest throw stumbling blocks in our way.

There are many things, said Eleanor, that are indifferent in themselves; and, of these, each of us should be our own judge. I would carry this a step further, and allow every one to choose, even in opposition to that strongest of all obligations custom; though, I own, I had rather not do so myse1f.

You are making an apology for my father, rejoined Mr. Henry, that I have often made before. I have said to myself, my father has inherited a fortune from his ancestors, which always entailed upon them a certain style of living. They have always maintained something like the same establishment, and kept something like the same company. It is well; and I would do so too. But who shall say there is a necessity to do so? Why may I not enjoy what is my own, in my own way? There can be but one solid objection against it the man who lives *by* himself, and *for* himself does not do the good he ought, to his fellow creatures; but for that he stands responsible to a higher power; not to me. Besides, of the numbers who enjoy their fortunes in a splendid manner, how many are

there who go beyond them? who are not even just? who owe what they cannot, or will not pay, and thereby ruin whole families? Here *I* blushed.

Justice, said Eleanor, is the foundation of all the virtues. Nothing can be virtuous that is unjust. I have been sorry to hear Charles Surface say that he could not make justice keep pace with generosity; and I have been grieved to hear such a sentiment applauded.

Yet it is the general opinion of mankind, said Mr. Henry. The man who pays all his debts, and neither spends money unnecessarily, or gives it away, is covetous, and a miser; shunned by, if he do not shun, society; while the man who enjoys and dispenses liberally, what is not his own, is an honest fellow.

I have always thought the term, covetous, misapplied, said I. It should properly belong to the sin forbidden by the tenth commandment, and be attached to those who covet their neighbour's goods; instead of which, it is commonly given to such as only wish to keep their own.

The one, if his propensities broke out into acts, would be hanged for a thief, said Mr. Henry Winterdale; the other only does not do the good he might, and therefore ought to do.

While you acknowledge that Mr. Winterdale's mode of life would not be your's, said Eleanor, how cheering to your bosom must be your filial obedience! I never, added she, with a sigh, knew the pleasure of filial obedience! I had the misfortune to lose both my parents, when I was between four and five years old.

I cannot remember my mother, said Mr. Henry; but I have been told she was one of the most excellent of women. How should I have loved and reverenced such a parent, if she had been spared to me! But, perhaps, added he, sighing in his turn, it is better as it is. With regard to my obedience to my father, it may not have all the merit you so kindly allow it. I have, hitherto, had little temptation to act contrary to his wishes; and, if it were otherwise, I am denied the means without having recourse to expedients I should be ashamed of.

Ah! thought I, while my face glowed, better not have six−pence in one's pocket than procure money as I have done! But, rallying my spirits, we have now brought you to a fair confession, said I, of the reason why you declined our acquaintance. You had little reason to act contrary to Mr. Winterdale's wishes.

Pardon me, replied he, with quickness, It was there I first felt the misery of passive obedience.

My mother then entering the room, and telling Mr. Henry his father had enquired for him, put an end to the conversation; as I will do to my letter, when I have assured you that

I am, faithfully your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 12. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, April 11, 1812

Behold, Harriet, the reward of my patience! Here have I walked quietly, with Eleanor, scraping acquaintance with all the flowers of the field! Here have I been contented with their company for hours, after I returned home! And now, Captain Montgomery to ride with us; Edmund Sharp, Esquire, to walk with us; Mr. Henry Winterdale to sit with us; and no female in the world that is, in our part of the world, to dispute the prize with us!

My mother is blest with the private conversation of Mr. Winterdale. As to Mr. and Mrs. Thacker, they have given official notice, by Mr. Sharp, that they cannot enter the house while Mr. Winterdale is in and happy is it for the poor gentleman that such is their determination; for, if he knew he was breathing the same air with the parson, his agitation would be sufficient to snap his leg a second time.

I have at length made the interesting discovery that Mr. Montgomery is the only son of the present Sir James Montgomery, who has taken my father's title. This morning, as we were airing, my horse was in so frolicksome a mood that, tired with his capering, and with pulling him in, I suffered him to take his own way; and he set off at a quicker rate than Eleanor chose to follow. No cavalier could have been so uncourteous as not to have extended his arms, if I should chance to fall; so the gentleman accompanied me, and we left my cousin, attended by her man, behind. That service, however, did not fall to the lot of Mr. Montgomery. My horse and I adjusted matters amicably, and slackened our pace to our mutual satisfaction.

Mr. Montgomery took the opportunity, while we were riding slowly, that Eleanor might overtake us, to say, that he owed it to the politeness and friendship he had found in our family, to let us know on whom we had bestowed them. His father, he said, had gone to India more than thirty years ago, without either fortune or expectation; that he had married one of those young ladies who are sent over by their parents, in search of an establishment, which their circumstances do not permit them to provide for them at home; that they had remained in India till very lately, when Mr. Montgomery determined to bring over his family and effects, and end his days in his native country. He added that his father had not made the fortune that had fallen to the lot of many; both because his post had been less lucrative, and because he did not choose to employ such means as they had done. With it, however, such as it was, and the pleasing reflections that the manner in which it had been acquired afforded him, he would have been content; but he had unfortunately entrusted a part of his property in a ship, which sailed before he left the country, and which had been lost. What remained, continued Mr. Montgomery, my father did not think sufficient for my establishment in life, without the addition of some profession; and he bought me a pair of colours.

Then you are not a captain, said I?

I am not, replied he; nor would I have suffered you to call me by that appellation so long; but that the courtesy of country towns makes all red coats captains, as well as all apothecaries doctors. I assure you the deception is not of my own creating. I never called myself a captain; and now, that I am more desirous of engaging your esteem than when I knew you less, I will not be known to you for other than I am.

I have one more circumstance to−mention, continued Mr. Montgomery. My father is descended from a branch of the family of the late Sir George Montgomery. When he left England, Sir George and his brother were both young; and there were several other persons between him and the title and estate ; so that the succession to either was quite out of the question. It appeared, on his return, however, that Sir George was dead, and had left an only daughter; and that, in consequence of this and other deaths which had happened, my father had an undoubted right to the title; and he has accordingly assumed it. He believes he has an equal right to the estate, and is endeavouring to prove it. I own I am sorry for this, whatever be the event. If he lose his cause, it must considerably lessen a fortune already too small; if he gain it, he must dispossess a young woman I am told, a beautiful and amiable young woman, who certainly has a natural right to her father's inheritance; let law say what it may.

In an extasy of gratitude, I repeated four lines of a song in the Duenna.

Thou canst not boast of fortune's store,
My love, while me they wealthy call;
But I am glad to find thee poor;
For, with my heart, I'll give thee all.

Do not be too much alarmed, my dear Harriet. I repeated these lines to myself not to Mr. Montgomery. In the first place, it is not certain that I shall have any thing to give; and, in the second, if it were, I would not dispose of it so hastily. I only thanked Mr. Montgomery for his confidence, and applauded his sentiments and, for that, I had more reasons than one, you know. But he is, really, a very pretty fellow; and a very honest fellow. In the words of Mistress Mouse, Shall I have him, if I can? It would be a good deed; if it were only to cheat the lawyers. I will think of it. I do not doubt it, say you.

Eleanor then rode up, and the conversation took another turn.

Our patient is doing well, and sits up in his bed. We have not yet had the honour of being introduced to him; but as his son is become one of the family, we the less regret that misfortune. For my part, if the father do but recover, I care not how slowly.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 13. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, April 18, 1812.

My promise to write every week, my dear Harriet, must either give me the liberty of sometimes writing very short letters; or you the mortification of reading very uninteresting ones. You are not to expect a gentleman should break his leg, and be carried into our house once a week, to supply me with a subject; or that I should as often discover a new cousin. The only circumstance I have now to inform you of is, that I have seen Mr. Winterdale. We were introduced to him, as Horton told Robinson, at my mother's request; not his own. My mother presented us to him as her daughter and her niece: and added, I would not have suffered these young women to intrude upon you, if they had been like the generality of giddy girls; but you will find them so quiet and discreet that I hope you will sometimes allow them to pay their respects to you.

The man looked at us, for a moment, as if he would have penetrated our very souls; then bowed, and said nothing.

We had had an excellent hint. It was our business to be *quiet* and *discreet*; so we said nothing.

My mother, who, I dare say, had frequently evinced her *quietness* and *discretion* before, did not contradict it now; so we all said nothing.

Mr. Winterdale looked very uneasy. He broke the silence by observing that it was poor entertainment for young ladies, to sit by a lame man in bed; particularly such a man as he, who had not been used to company.

Eleanor said we did not, by any means, seek our own entertainment, in waiting upon him; she had, all her life been accustomed to provide a great part of it for herself, as well as he; but she was glad of an opportunity of expressing the pleasure she felt at his being, so far, recovered from his accident.

He looked at her, with a scrutinizing eye; but, seeing nothing like deceit in her sweet face, he thanked her with some cordiality.

We none of us derive our amusements from company, said my mother. It was to avoid that we came into the country.

The little I have seen of company, said Eleanor, I always thought was purchased at more than it was worth. I am not acquainted with society in London; but, in the country I have often spent an hour in dressing, in order to spend two or three hours with people whom I have been heartily glad to be released from.

That has been just my ease, said Mr. Winterdale; though I wonder to hear such a sentiment from a young lady. When I have formerly been induced to visit a neighbouring family, I have found so little to repay the trouble, that I resolved to give it up. If a man wants a good dinner, he may get it at home: if he wants good wine, he may get that too; and without being obliged to take more than he likes: and as to conversation, at dinner it is all about eating; after dinner it is all noise; and after tea it is all cards,

But you would sometimes find conversation of a different kind; would not you, Sir, demanded I?

Yes, answered Mr. Winterdale. I might listen to the exploits of a man's dogs or horses, and pretend to admire what I did not care for. I might dispute upon politics till both sides were ready to quarrel. I might hear the domestic affairs of every family in the neighbourhood: so I thought it best to stay at home, and take care of my own.

That is a subject which cannot be otherwise than acceptable, said my mother.

And it will pay a man for his attention, rejoined Mr. Winterdale.

I am of your opinion, Sir, said I, that one of the heaviest taxes society has to pay is that of listening to what we had rather not hear, and admiring what one cannot like.

Women are subjected to another tax, said Eleanor, and, perhaps men are not wholly exempted from it; that of contributing our share of what is not worth hearing. I do not know so fatiguing an exertion, as talking when one has nothing to say.

You can have nothing to say, in common companies in the country, said Mr. Winterdale, unless you will reply to other people's affairs by talking of your own.

The most desirable society, said my mother, is that of a friend, to whom our own concerns may be interesting; and for whose welfare we feel an interest, in return.

I do not know where you will find such a friend, said Mr. Winterdale.

I flatter myself, said I, that Miss Mowbray and I have each found such a friend in the other.

Miss Mowbray and you are very young women, replied Mr. Winterdale. Let one of you be more admired than the other; let one of you be preferred by the man you are both desirous to please; let one of you be well, and the other ill−married; let one of you become poor, while the other remains rich; then see what will become of your friendship!

I had like to have forfeited my character for quietness and discretion; for I could not help exclaiming, What a frightful catalogue of evils!

Some of them prudence may prevent; and may heaven avert the rest, said Eleanor!

In London, said Mr. Winterdale, though I know very little of it, I suppose the number of public places, and the number of people who frequent them, furnish topics of conversation; and the multitudes that now meet at the houses of the great have rendered them public places: but, in the country, when you first meet, nobody has any

thing to say; and, when you have been together some time, every body is for speaking at once. The only way in which, I think, society could be tolerable, would be, for a man to sit silent, half a day together, if he felt no inclination to speak; and to rise from his chair, and go to the window, or leave the room whenever another was saying what he had no mind to hear.

Those would be happy days, indeed, Sir, said Eleanor; but, as we cannot hope for them, I think I should have no objection to a general acquaintance, at my first entrance into the world, to give me an opportunity of electing those I might like best. I should be very fortunate if I could find six or eight families, with whom I could associate upon easy terms; who would be my guests for days, weeks, or months, as it might happen; and be glad to see me sometimes theirs. I would have no dinner parties. They are a sacrifice of time and money to vanity. I should not expect my chosen acquaintance to be my friends, in the strict sense of the word; but we might be agreeable to each other, without an effort: and I would leave them to entertain themselves in their own way.

I like your plan, Eleanor, said I: a sort of Harrowgate society; where some might read or work, while others walked or rode out. It approaches nearer Mr. Winterdale's idea than any thing I know.

The difficulty would be to reduce it to practice, said Mr. Winterdale; not to find the people; but to find them agreeable: to say nothing of the expense of turning one's house into an inn.

I am supposing, Sir, said Eleanor, that the expense were considerably within my income, or I should not attempt it: and, perhaps, it might not be much greater than to cover your table with a profusion of dainties, and an abundance of wine, at stated intervals, for all the people within ten miles of you.

If there was a necessity to spend the money in one or the other, rejoined Mr. Winterdale, your's is the best way.

You are arguing with Mr. Winterdale on his dislike to company, while we are fatiguing him with our own, said my mother.

We then left Mr. Winterdale to his own reflections; as I will leave you, when I have assured you that I am,

Truly your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 14. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, April 25, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

I cannot help fancying that my mother has a mind to set her widow's coif at Mr. Winterdale, and I have communicated my suspicions to Eleanor, who entertains similar ones herself. While we were not of the party, we supposed that the want of employment, and the desire of moulding the iron heart of Mr. Winterdale into a neighbourly pliability, had transformed the gay lady Montgomery into a nurse. When we were first admitted, we perceived her wish that we should gain a share of his good opinion, and her anxious fear lest we should say any thing that might prove us undeserving of it, together with a very guarded conduct of her own.

We now visit Mr. Winterdale every day, and I perceive my mother watches the symptoms of satisfaction or uneasiness that prevail in his countenance, and regulates our stay by these tokens. She is, herself, almost

constantly in his room, with no other attendant than Horton. Mendall is dismissed, to mind affairs at home. Mr. Henry is here the whole of the morning; but, what with giving us a call before he goes up stairs, and bidding us farewell when he comes down, he is more with us than with his father.

My mother seems to be making a systematic attack upon Mr. Winterdale. To speak in a military phrase, she has drawn a line of circumvallation about him, which she is advancing by imperceptible degrees, in hopes the besieged may be compelled to surrender. How should I laugh to see the poor, unsuspecting gentleman taken captive! the wise, the prudent, the wary, Mr. Winterdale caught in a trap! the man who has lived only for himself, sighing for a woman! 0, triumphant woman, what can thy beauty and thy arts not effect, if they can compass this!

But what can my mother mean to do with Mr. Winterdale, when she has caught him? Does she intend to divert herself with seeing him struggle in his chains, and then let him go? or can she seriously think of marrying him? Though I laugh at the idea of his circumspection being outwitted; yet, I assure you, I should approve of neither. To marry any man, in my mother's circumstances, without making him acquainted with them, would be worse than artful; it would be base; and Mr. Winterdale would be the last man upon earth to marry her, if they were known. To trifle with any man's feelings, without an intention of rewarding them, is almost equally unjustifiable. It is true, I believe, that the feelings of Mr. Winterdale are of a calcareous substance; and his heart−strings, if he has any, of tough, endurable leather; but even these should not be wantonly played upon for her amusement.

Mr. Winterdale is got to the sopha. We were all sitting in his room last night, when my mother proposed a rubber at whist.

It is a long time since I played at whist, said Mr. Winterdale. I like the game well enough, but I do not like to risque my money at it. I always thought it absurd to try to better my fortune, by means that were as likely to diminish it; when there were ways to increase it with certainty.

O, said my mother, I cannot bear to play for money. It was merely pour passer le temps that I mentioned it. We will either play for sixpences, or, as the country people say here, for love, which you please.

For sixpence the rubber then, said Mr. Winterdale, without playing the points. One should have some stake, to engage one's attention.

Then love is not sufficient to engage your attention, Sir, without a little money, said I smiling?

I hope you will find it so bye and bye, replied he. You see love and nothing are synonimous terms.

If you have no objection, said my mother, you and I will endeavour to beat these young folks, without taking our chance for partners.

Mr. Winterdale could have no objection; but, as fortune would have it, the young folks beat them. His anxiety was extreme, and his disappointment in proportion. Had he staked a year's revenue on the rubber, instead of sixpence, he could scarcely have felt it more. My mother seemed to repent her experiment, and joined him in lamenting their hard fate. The next rubber was their's, and wore off the effects of the former. But would you credit it? my mother begged us, this morning, not to irritate our guest, by winning his money; as the party was made solely to amuse him, in his confinement; but rather suffer him to win our's. I willingly consent to it, for I should fear one of his sixpences would contaminate my purse. But, take care, Mr. Winterdale; or you will, one day, pay dear for this child−like indulgence.

When Mr. Henry called this morning, The doctors give us no hopes, said I, with a sorrowful countenance; your father will be well soon, and all these days of kindness will be forgotten.

Never, by me, while I have breath, replied he.

Why, is it possible, demanded I, that you can visit us, when Mr. Winterdale is returned home?

I hope the treatment my father has met with here, answered he, will produce a change both in his feelings, and his way of life. His heart must be most impenetrable; it could not even be human; if he were insensible of the kindness of Mrs. Mereval; or ungrateful for it. He speaks of her in very high terms; and I have no doubt that it will be his greatest pleasure to cultivate a friendship so honourable and so advantageous to himself.

Do you think, said Eleanor, after such a long seclusion from the world, that Mr. Winterdale can ever voluntarily seek society?

A month ago, I think he could not. answered Henry; but having once found the charm of it, I think it will be as impossible for him to relinquish it. My father has an activity both of body and mind, that prevented him from languishing in solitude. He felt no want of company; and most assuredly, would neither have sought it, or admitted it; but the pleasures of agreeable society and reciprocal kindness, being forced upon him, they would make a stronger impression on his heart, from their being new; and, having once tasted them, I cannot believe he can give them up. The only fear that rests upon my mind is, lest Mrs. Mereval should withdraw her kindness, when her patient no longer stands in need of it.

I have no fear of that, replied I.

Then, said Eleanor to Mr. Henry, if one can promise for his father, and the other for her mother, we may still hope for the pleasure of seeing you.

Nothing but the positive commands of one, or all of you ladies, could prevent that, he said, and I should then find submission a. harder task than ever I did in my life.

You forget that your father's commands might prevent it, said I.

They could have no such power, answered he. I am three and twenty; and, in such a case, I should certainly judge for myself.

Then you either practice filial obedience, when your own inclinations do not oppose it, said I, or you think three and twenty the age to discard it wholly.

Pardon me, Miss Mereval, said he, you are too severe. I make a distinction between what I conceive to be my father's rights and my own. In his own house, and of his own conduct, who should be master but my father? Imagine me saying, 'Sir, you ought to keep such an establishment, such an equipage, and such company; and you ought to like these things, because I should like them. Further, you ought to allow me a certain portion of your own money, to dispose of in whatever manner I please, whether you like it or no.' What a figure should I make, thus invading the rights of another? But suppose my father attacking mine; suppose him saying, 'Henry, I insist upon it that you go no more to Mrs. Mereval's;' I should first respectfully inquire his reasons for the prohibition. In what have they offended you, Sir? Of what have they been guilty? 'Nothing of this,' he would reply, (for nothing could be urged) 'but you know I do not like company; and, now, I am recovered, and got home, I shall live as I did before the accident.' Do you believe I would regard such an order, supported by such reasons? No more than the wind that whistled over my head. To resume his former way of life, or not, would be my father's to determine: to deprive myself of the friendship of Mrs. Mereval, and you and Miss Mowbray, or not, would be mine; and no earthly power could compel me to it, but your own. In such a cause, I would risque every hope of the favour and inheritance of my father.

There was a dignity in Mr. Henry's sentiments and manner that struck us with awe; the dignity of independence. Eleanor hung down her head, afraid to look at him; while a charming blush stole over her cheeks. I shrunk into myself; and found, fatally found, that something could be urged against us. When he left us, I went up stairs, and throwing myself upon my knees, in the bitterness of my heart, I cried, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy child. Assist me in the resolution I make before thee, never again, wilfully, to do what I know to be wrong.

My present interest, would prompt me to this vow, were the future intirely out of the question; for, by some fatality or other, every person I converse with plants a thorn in my bosom.

Continue your friendship and regard for

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 15. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, May 2, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

Our patient begins to use his leg; but shews no inclination to move it out of the house. My mother's designs are more apparent, as she becomes more confident of success. Her attentions are openly directed to Mr. Winterdale, in a manner that cannot be mistaken; and his tenderness, in return, is of the most awkward kind you can imagine that of a stubborn, unbending, uncontrouled mind, yielding to affection, in spite of itself. His expressions of it are such as, in another, might be termed rudeness, and abruptness; but, from him, they mean a great deal; perhaps, nothing less than the offer of his hand.

Now, what is my part? here, two duties clash. If I consider Mr. Winterdale, shall I stand by, and see him imposed upon? If I look at my mother, have I a right to betray her? I am supposing she has formed the plan of marrying him, without acknowledging she has involved herself in debt, which, I fear is more likely than that she should candidly confess it; for such a circumstance; so totally repugnant to every one of his principles and propensities, must put an end to her hopes. Mr. Winterdale is just; though parsimonious: his justice would revolt at her conduct: and he, who cannot spend his own money, would abhor the woman who could spend what was not her's, and surely would not render himself liable to pay it.

After some reflection, I have determined, first to remonstrate with my mother, and then to be silent. She shall not take so unworthy a step, without my entering my protest against it, in the strongest terms a child can use to a parent. If this avail not, I will be aiding and abetting in no deceit; and I will make no discovery. I will stand aloof, and leave the issue to themselves. Though my mother may be artful, Mr. Winterdale is eagle−eyed, and may, by his own foresight, escape the snare. He cannot marry my mother, without the disclosure of her real name; and this would probably lead to a discovery of her situation. In that case, I must bear my part of shame, for the past but a part of no more fault if I can help it.

O, Harriet, I begin to see the consequences of my error! I fear I shall lose my vivacity; the flow of spirits which should carry me through the world! and, dreadful to say, I fear I shall condemn my mother.

I have not, of late, mentioned Mr. Montgomery. He visits us, without ceasing, and his looks and actions declare his partiality to me; though his words have not made the most distant allusion to it: and how can they, when he knows not whom it is, that he regards? Ought I not to repay his honest frankness by saying, I am your cousin; the presumptive heiress of an estate your father is endeavouring to wrest from me? If, then, his love were

serious, and mine could be gained, in return, what more obvious than a union of our interests? But then I have the humiliating, the destroying confession to make I have lived beyond the income allowed by my guardians! I have borrowed money of usurers! I am hiding my head, and disowning my name, till I see the event of my contest with your father! What honest man could take me to his bosom, after this? and what prudent father would consent to it, if he could?

In how different a light do I now view my conduct, from that in which it appeared to me at the time! I then thought I was only anticipating a small part of future abundance, to supply present necessity: now, it seems, that I may have been robbing another, and subjecting myself to the horrors of a prison. The robbery may be ideal, if things come to the worst; but I assure you the prison is not. When I come of age, I shall be called upon to pay a serious sum; and, if I lose my cause, I have no means to pay it. The very trade of my creditors; the hazards they run; make them relentless. While my suit is pending, they may spare me, for their own sakes; but if it be once decided against me, I can hope for no mercy.

My ruin involves that of my mother. Her jointure nothing can touch, during her life; but the five hundred pounds a year she has received for my board and education must be restored, if Sir James should prove himself the right owner of the Montgomery estate. Nothing could be mine, but the personal estate of my father. At first it was considerable, but where is it now? dissipated a thousand ways: and of whom could I demand it? of my own mother.

When I said there were two sorts of things I would not grieve for those I could help, and those I could not help, I forgot a third, and the most oppressive those I might have helped, and did not.

Eleanor, from whom I do not conceal a thought, endeavours to comfort me, by reminding me that I ought not to estimate my fault by its present appearance; that it could neither be foreseen or imagined a competitor would arise for what was then indisputably mine; and, finally, that this unexpected claim may be a wise and merciful dispensation of providence, to save me from recurring to an expedient which might have led me to disgrace and ruin.

I will not trouble you with any more of my melancholy reflections: and, at present, I can write nothing which is not of the same cast.

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 16. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, May 9, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

My conjectures were too true. Last night, after supper, my mother began by saying, Charlotte, I wish to have a little conversation with you.

Eleanor rose, to leave the room.

 No, sit down, said my mother. I look upon you as a second daughter. I have nothing to say to Charlotte that I do not wish you to hear. Eleanor sat down. My mother seemed a little at a loss how to proceed; but, after a moment's pause, she said, In using every means to humanize Mr. Winterdale, and to contribute to his comfort, I have, unexpectedly made a conquest of him. These men generally run from one extreme to the other.

I believe it is very natural, said I. Perhaps it is, continued my mother. I thought I observed his partiality some time ago; but, last week he made me an earnest offer of himself; and ever since has been endeavouring to obtain my consent to our marriage.

My mother stopped. Eleanor and I remained silent.

I certainly never intended to venture upon a second marriage, continued she; but I thought, Charlotte, I would ask your advice.

My advice is that you keep your resolution, said I.

Such, I suppose, would be the general opinion of grown−up daughters, with regard to their mothers, however they might think for themselves. But my sentiments are, that Mr. Winterdale, with six thousand pounds a year, is not to be rejected without some deliberation.

You could not marry Mr. Winterdale, Madam, without telling him who you are.

I have already told him, replied my mother.

And what is his opinion, demanded I, of a woman who assumes a borrowed name, and flies to a distant part of the kingdom, to avoid her creditors?

It was not necessary to ask his opinion upon that point, answered my mother; any more than it was for you to ask so impertinent a question. There are other reasons sufficient to account for our leaving town, and changing our name. If I were tired of our expensive way of living; of our parties, and public places; and chose to retire into the country, and adopt a different way of life; my own inclination is a sufficient motive: I need not assign any cause for that inclination.

Is such an inclination a sufficient motive for assuming a feigned name, said I?

Certainly, replied my mother. Do you think some of the friends of Lady Montgomery would not have found her out, in the country, and broken in upon her plans?

Indeed, I fear they would, said I, with a deep sigh; and I fear it still.

It would be to get rid of the apprehension you allude to, and which haunts me, as well as yourself, that I might be brought to listen to Mr. Winterdale.

You surely would not marry him, Madam, without informing him how much you are in debt?

How could I do that, when I do not know myself?

But you could give him information of the fact;, though not of the particulars.

Do you think he would retain his good opinion of me, if I did?

He would not. But what is the good opinion worth that is not founded upon truth, and that can only last until the cheat is discovered?

Allow me to tell you, Miss Montgomery, that you make use of very extraordinary language to your mother.

Pardon me, dear Madam, said I: my nature revolts against it; but consider, pray consider, that the world, will give it no milder a name; and that the hatred and contempt of Mr. Winterdale, himself, must be the consequence of such a trick.

Again, exclaimed my mother! The world's opinion I little care for: and as to Mr. Winterdale's opinion, when the discovery is made; we must light it out, like other married people and when we are both tired, we may sit down and be friends.

My dear mother, said I, if you set the world at nought, and believe you can manage Mr. Winterdale; is the peace of your own bosom; is the approbation of your own conscience, of no value?

Conscience is a fine thing to talk of, replied my mother, and when it can be pleased I admire it. But do you think *my* conscience is easy now? do not I owe money which I cannot pay? am not I between two evils, and should therefore chuse the least? shall I remain indebted to a number of poor trades−people, whose families are suffering for the loss? or shall I compel a man to pay them, who has been long hoarding money, for no earthly purpose, but to look at it?

If you take my advice, said I, you shall not repair one error, by committing another. It is the usual consequence of faults to lead to faults; but, be the result what it might, I would stop short at the first.

You that can so readily tell me what I ought not to do, said my mother, tell me what I can do.

Openly confess your situation to Mr. Winterdale, said I, Tell him you cannot impose upon him. Tell him you sought the shelter of Ravenhill Lodge for security to yourself, not to deceive others; and, least of all him, who professes a regard for you. Tell him that you are laying by the superfluous part of your income, towards retrieving your affairs, and that if my father's estate be awarded to me, I shall supply the rest. If he has any generosity your ingenuous conduct will not go unrequited; if he has not, let him go; and by steadily persevering in a system of economy, we may, at some future time, look the world in the face.

Yes, said my mother, by the time I am threescore. You who expect Montgomery to rescue you from obscurity, may talk of economy and perseverance, but what, is to become of me? Am I to grow grey at a lodge, which is never visited by any human being, but the squire and the parson, and not even by these together, till your chancery suit is decided? and ever after, if it be decided against you? unless, indeed, I were hunted out of it, and obliged to board with some village curate, at fifty pounds a year, while my jointure were appropriated to the discharge of my debts!

Montgomery, replied I, has never spoken to me of love but, if he loved me to distraction, and I loved him no less; and if his father stood by, intreating me to accept his son; I would sooner die in such a retreat as you mention, than marry him, till I had made a full confession of my folly.

And I never will add that folly to my others, said my mother. But, perhaps, you, who have such a taste for acknowledging errors, may take upon you to disclose mine?

No, replied I: I conceive it would be unbecoming your daughter to expose the faults of her parent; but in you it would be just to reveal your own. I would fain say noble; but it is no more than just. I once more beseech you, my dear mother, do not ruin your future peace, both as it regards Mr. Winterdale and yourself, by such unworthy duplicity!

Have I not answered your *beseechments*, already, said my mother? Have I not told you that I think it less dishonourable to discharge my debts with money which will be my own, than to remain in a situation in which I cannot discharge them? and, as to Mr. Winterdale, I think the widow of Sir George Montgomery, with my person,

and a jointure of a thousand pounds a year, is a very good match for him; if she do owe a little money. Besides, am not I ten or a dozen years younger than he? and ought he not to pay for that?

Possibly he might be of your opinion, said I, if he were acquainted with the truth.

That is a hazard I again tell you I will not run, answered my mother.

Are you not afraid, said I, that chance may make the discovery, before the marriage can take place?

I must trust to chance for that, replied my mother. If it should, Mr. Winterdale must either exercise his generosity or his prudence; and I must evince either my gratitude or my patience.

Would not you think it right, said Eleanor, to inform him of the chancery suit?

I have done it, answered my mother; and I believe his earnest desire to have the management of a suit in chancery is one of his inducements to make proposals to me.

My mother then rung the bell for Horton, and retired.

Eleanor and I looked at each other, for some moments, in silence; at length I said, So you see her ladyship has asked my advice just when she was determined to do as she pleased!

That is the proper time to ask advice, said Eleanor. If you happen to be of the opinion of the person who asks it, he avails himself of your sanction; if you do not, he enters into an argument with you. I remember reading of an elderly gentleman, who sent for two of his friends, and consulted them on the propriety of his marrying his housekeeper. He enumerated all her good qualities, and all the advantages that would accrue to himself, from such a step. The friends were not convinced, and remonstrated against it. The gentleman urged his former arguments, with greater force. One of the friends was beginning to answer them, with some warmth; when the other, more sagacious, stopped him. Before you proceed any further, said he, give me leave to ask our friend one question Are you not already married? The gentleman owned he was. Well then, said the friend, nothing remains but to wish you joy, and to beg we may have the honour of saluting your lady. The lady was accordingly introduced, and placed at the head of the table; and the visit passed off to the satisfaction of all parties.

As the two friends were returning home together, the gentleman who had been prepared to argue thanked the other for his timely interference: For said he, if you had not prevented me, I should have said some things for which our friend would never have forgiven me. But how came it to enter into your head, continued he, that he was married? I don't know, replied the other. I fancied he had done a foolish thing, and had a mind to shelter himself under our advice.

I am glad, however, said I, that I have disburthened my mind freely to my mother. Though no good can result from it, with regard to her, much will to myself. I feel more at ease than I have ever done since I suspected her design.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 17. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, May 16, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

Mr. Winterdale left us last Monday, and has not been at the Lodge since; so it seems the projected match is not yet to be brought under the discussion of the public. Mr. Henry says his father is going to London upon business, as soon as he dare trust his leg. Perhaps that business may be to make enquiries concerning Lady Montgomery, and the intelligence may be such as will keep her ladyship a widow. It can hardly be imagined that the careful, prying, penetrating Mr. Winterdale should take her upon her own word. He must be far gone, indeed, if he does.

Mr. Henry visits us as usual. I said to him, this morning, You find you were mistaken in supposing that Mr. Winterdale would not forsake the Lodge, when he was once able to get away from it. He is not half so civil as Noah's dove: she came back twice to her benefactor, before she quitted him for ever; he does not even return once.

It was necessity, not gratitude, that brought her back, said Eleanor. You know the waters still covered the earth, and she found no rest for the sole of her foot.

Then there are hopes of Mr. Winterdale, said I. Necessity may yet be our friend.

It is the most extraordinary circumstance I ever met with, said Henry. I could not have believed it was in human nature to receive the benefits my father has from Mrs. Mereval, and, as soon as he had escaped from her house, to shew no remembrance of them!

There is a great deal more in human nature than you know of, said I.

There is much I never wish to know, replied he. I wish I had never known such a flagrant instance of ingratitude in my father.

You never saw Mr. Winterdale and my mother together, as we have, said I. She thought it proper to give the father and son an opportunity of unreserved conversation, and therefore generally withdrew when you came; but Eleanor and I have lately passed our evenings with them; and, I assure you, we observed a complacency in his behaviour towards my mother, that we did not expect.

What can have become of it then, said he?

I do not know, replied I; but I suspect it is bottled up; and bye and bye the cork will fly, and it will all come out, with a bounce.

Henry could not help laughing; though he looked very anxious. What do you mean, cried he?

I intend to practise a very wise look, if my face is capable of it, before I tell you, answered I.

He looked, with eager eyes, on E1eanor.

Charlotte has a mind to amuse herself with your impatience, said she; but we really imagine there is a little love between Mr. Winterdale and Mrs. Mereval.

The lightning flashed from his eye in a moment. But, checking himself, he said, May I credit you, Miss Mowbray?

How monstrous, exclaimed I! Does any body doubt Miss Mowbray? If I had asserted it, indeed, you might have looked incredulous.

Pardon me. he cried. I was afraid to give way to the pleasure I felt but I cannot doubt it. The conduct of my father can only be accounted for by love or hatred. Gratitude would have pursued a middle course; and hatred is as impossible as that it should be the nature of the sun to freeze.

If a certain event should take place, said I, how happy we shall all be, as brother and sisters! We shall enliven that old hall of yours; and take the damask curtains out of the hands of the spiders.

I am still afraid to hope, said he, that Miss Mowbray and you would honour the old hall so far as to make it your home.

What is my mother's castle is mine. said I, till some adventurous knight shall be bold enough to take me from it. There sits Eleanor: let her answer for herself.

And I, said Eleanor, will never leave my cousin for a less cause; nor even for that if I can help it. It should require two knights to separate us.

How lovely is friendship in two beautiful young females, exclaimed Henry! The man that would divide you, does not deserve either. But how shall I express my emotions of joy and wonder at what you tell me? a circumstance so much beyond my hopes, that it never entered my mind.

Why, you are as much transported as if you were going to marry my mother yourself, said I.

A great deal more, replied he; for am I not to live with you and Miss Mowbray morning, noon, and evening? is not my home to be your home?

Softly, said I; that is by no means certain. A moment ago you would not believe a fact; and now you are carrying it to all its possible consequences. You do not consider that your father may repent, before it is too late.

Neither then, or ever, I hope, said Henry.

I sighed.

There are some young men, said Eleanor, who would not hail the idea of a mother−in−law with so much pleasure.

Perhaps I might be one of the number, if I were differently situated, replied he. You perceive I have associated other ideas with it; and that of enjoying your company and Miss Mereval's, is among the first. But I hope to see the good effects of such a union on my father. I hope to see his unsocial habits yielding to the sweets of love and friendship; and his parsimonious ones to the dictates of Mrs. Mereval's propriety and generosity.

Ah! said I, be not too sanguine: the age of miracles is past.

What cannot love accomplish, said Henry? his miracles can never be past. Did he not transform an unfeeling clod into an ardent lover?

Cymon was not almost fifty, replied I; nor had he lived twenty years by himself.

But is not love daily assimilating the most distant characters, asked Henry.

I believe, said Eleanor, a similarity of disposition is not necessary to create love: this instance will prove it, as well as a thousand others: but, I think, when married people have lived together some time, they gradually approach nearer the character of each other; by a wish to please; by mutual sacrifices of their own inclinations; by imitation, which has some influence, though, perhaps, unknown to themselves; and, last of all, by habit.

If you are right, said Henry, as I believe you are, how careful ought people to be in marriage; since, if they chuse ill, the good will become bad, and the bad worse.

But, on the other hand, said I, the bad will be mended, and the human race not worse, upon the whole; which seems to me a fairer way than that a few families should hoard up all excellence within themselves, and leave the rest of mankind in a state of hopeless reprobation.

Then, said Henry, we will leave the good and bad to mingle as they may, and make as tolerable a production as they can: and, further, we will match opposite vices, to create virtues. Thus rashness and cowardice may produce patience; carelessness and envy, emulation; and avarice and profusion, generosity.

You see, my dear Harriet, that Mr. Winterdale has made a better choice than I expected. I hope my mother's disposition and his will have a salutary effect upon each other. As for any little brother and sister Generosities, I should think Mr. Henry would excuse their appearance.

I need not tell you that we cautioned Henry with regard to secresy; or that he was aware of its necessity, as well as ourselves If the event never happen, it is better not to have been suspected; if it do, let those concerned divulge it in their own way.

Henry Winterdale's solicitudes and attentions might be construed into love, if they were directed to one of us; but he poises them so exactly, that neither of us can say she has a greater share than the other. As he has promised not to divide, so he has resolved not to distinguish, Eleanor Mowbray from

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL

Letter 18. < p>TO HENRY WINTERDALE, ESQ.

London, May 21, 1812

Dear Henry,

I arrived safe in town last night, without any inconvenience to my leg; and as I mean to make a short stay, I have instantly set about the business that brought me hither. I have called upon my agent, and desired him to prepare his accounts for my inspection, without delay. But I have a business of far more importance in hand, which I have not yet informed you of.

You know what a solitary life I have led for many years past. In fact, I begin to be tired and ashamed of it. I might, however, have continued it still, if accident had not brought me acquainted with the lady at the Lodge. I

found her, at first, so humane, and so careful of me, than I must have been worse than a brute, not to have been thankful; and, upon further knowledge of her; I discovered that she was prudent, frugal, and of few words; and that she had retired into the country merely to avoid company. All these things so gained upon me, that I did not like the thoughts of returning home, and giving up such a treasure.

While I was ruminating upon this subject, and wishing to know some particulars of her family and fortune, her maid brought her a letter, in my presence, which she opened, and I was sufficiently near to see that it contained a bank note of five hundred pounds. Perceiving my curiosity was excited, she put the open letter into my hands, saying, that though she had shunned the society of a numerous acquaintance in London, many of whom were attracted by her daughter; yet she would explain her situation to me, whom she regarded as a particular friend. She then proceeded to tell me that her real name was Montgomery; that she was the widow of Sir George Montgomery; that her jointure was a thousand pounds per annum; and that the letter in my hands was from a Mr. Mountney, an eminent solicitor in London (whom I knew by name) enclosing the last half year's income. You will observe, continued she, that the letter is addressed to Mrs. Mereval; but, within it, my title is mentioned, though not my name. My own inclination would have led me to avoid the company I have been too much drawn into; but I have an additional motive. A distant relation claims the estate of the late Sir George; the affair is now in Chancery; and though there is no doubt that my daughter's right will be established, I should not choose to appear in the world, while it is disputed. We have taken the name of Mereval, for the present, that we may not be followed and interrupted by such of our acquaintance as might be disposed to break in upon our retirement.

I thanked Lady Montgomery for her confidence, and it determined me immediately, as to the course I should take. I told her that her society was become so agreeable to me, that I dreaded to lose it, as the time approached when I must quit her house; and, that if she thought favourably enough of me to accept my offer, I would make her an additional jointure of five hundred pounds per annum, and undertake the management of the chancery suit. She received my proposal like a woman who was not in haste to refuse it; and, soon after, I obtained her consent.

You know I am under no obligation to justify my conduct to you, who are my son; or even to give any reason for it; but I will take upon me to say, that independent of the person of Lady Montgomery, and my regard for her, this is one of the best bargains I ever made in my life. She requires no carriage, not even another servant in the house, except those she will bring with her from the Lodge, which are indispensable. She will add a thousand pounds a year to my income; and, upon the exactest calculation I can make, she and her three women servants will not cost me three hundred pounds. There is seven hundred pounds annual gain. Her daughter will pay me two hundred pounds a year for her board, and will not even have a maid to wait upon her. She cannot eat and drink more than thirty shillings a week, which will amount to seventy−eight pounds a year; say eighty, for the sake of even numbers. That increases the profit to eight hundred and twenty pounds. Miss Mowbray will also pay two hundred pounds, which, at the same rate, makes nine hundred and forty. She will pay a hundred pounds for her two servants; and I would willingly take sixty pounds out of this, to make up my thousand; which I ought to do, as they will chiefly consume what is left at our own table; but servants are such a set of confounded wasters, that I dare not. I shall not lose by them, however, and we can make Miss Mowbray's man assist Mendall.

Thus, you will see, at a fair calculation, I cannot gain less than nine hundred pounds per annum by my marriage with Lady Montgomery; and prudence would have decided for it, had inclination been out of the question. Of the truth of her statement, the letter I saw, was a sufficient voucher; but that I might have nothing to reproach myself with, I this morning called upon Mr. Mountney, who confirmed every syllable of it; her jointure, her retiring from the world, her assuming the name of Mereval, and the chancery suit.

Charity would have been another motive for my marrying Lady Montgomery, if I had wanted one. What a pity would it be for a couple of poor defenceless women to be plagued with a suit in chancery, while I had nothing to do but manage a few actions at common law. I shall take great pleasure in conducting it, and I am sure we shall win.

I have another project in my head, which you cannot fail to approve.

The Montgomery estate is upwards of £8,000 per annum, and I believe it is capable of being raised to £10,000. When the law−suit is determined in her favour, you shall marry Miss Montgomery. And now, you cannot but say that, with such a wife, and such a fortune, I have amply provided for you. In the mean time, you will have every opportunity to take care that another does not snap her up. It is true the girl is a little pert; but with her person, family and fortune, something must be excused.

I had some thoughts of proposing an excursion into Wales to Lady Montgomery and her family, marrying her when there, and taking her straight to Winterdale Hall, on our return; but I have changed my mind, to spite the parson. I will make him publish the banns in the church, three times, for a shilling; and then marry us for the least sum allowed by law. What that is, I know not. I mean to enquire of my attorney; but I believe it is tenpence. You will, therefore, send him a shilling, as soon as you receive this, and a written order to publish the banns of marriage between John Winterdale and Mary Montgomery, both of this parish; and you will desire it to be done the three first days that there is service in the church. Do not fail; and whatever questions may be asked you, answer none.

You will likewise give Martha the keys of all the rooms, and tell her to air them, and put every thing in order. The labourer's wife may help her. And let the ham that is not so good as it should be, be eaten.

I hope you are satisfied with the sixty pounds a year that I have consented to allow you. I am sure it is more than I could spend, if I had meat, drink, washing and lodging provided for me, as you have. I thought fifty more than sufficient; but I had a mind to be munificent, so threw in the other ten.

I have made Mendall acquainted with my matrimonial scheme. He approves it very much. I shall new dress both myself and him, in London. Deliver the letter inclosed with this, as directed; and write a line, to tell me you have obeyed the orders of

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN WINTERDALE.

Letter 19. TO JOHN WINTERDALE, ESQ.

Winterdale, May 23, 1812

Dear Sir,

I have obeyed your commands, with the strictest punctuality; though I own I was sorry to be the instrument of such a marked affront to Mr. Thacker.

It is with the sincerest pleasure that I congratulate you on your approaching marriage, and on the choice you have made. The ladies at the Lodge have always appeared to me, not only among the most beautiful, but among the most accomplished and most deserving of their sex; and I should have blessed the day that brought us acquainted with them, if it had not been distinguished by such a serious accident to yourself. I look forward with great satisfaction to the pleasure of such society, in our present, and long past, lonely mansion.

I have delivered your letter to whom shall I say? to Mrs. Mereval, as it was directed; and have introduced myself to the young ladies, as their future brother. I know not how to pronounce or write the name of Montgomery; as I have, myself, such an inviolable regard for truth, that I would have trusted to my own energy to repel intruders,

rather than have shrunk from them, under a borrowed name.

I have ventured to employ a few labourers in the gardens and park, and to send for some different workmen from the town, to put the house in order; believing that on such an occasion, you would not choose to have any thing wear the appearance of neglect.

With regard to the allowance you thought proper to offer me when I left college, it is certainly inadequate to the wants of a man in my station; but if such be your pleasure, I shall bring my wants down to it; for I cannot beg, even of my father.

I am, dear Sir,

Your ever dutiful and affectionate Son,

HENRY WINTERDALE.

Letter 20. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Winterdale, May 23, 1812

Dear Muster Mendall,

As Muster Henry is so kind as to offer to send this pissel for me, I must rite a line to tel you the news; tho every thing is at sixes and sevvens, and I dont kno wich to begin furst; for I am in sich a quandary, I cant tel how to turn miself. The long and the short is, my masters going to be marrid. He is to be axt in church tomorro, wich, to be shure, is the most strangest thing that ever anny gentelman thot on. For sich as wee to be axt in church is all very natteral, and I shold have no objecshons to it miself*;* but for a grand gentleman like him, its quite monstrus, and wot is as odd, to the full, noboddy does not kno who the lady is. Wen Rafe tooke the banes to Mr. Thaccer this morning, they had him into the parler, and axt him if he knod wot hid brot. And Rafe sed, No; but I was to ge a shillin with it, and there it is. And they sed, says they, why its banes a marrige between your master and won Mary Mungummery; who is she? Says Rafe, says he, thats moor nor I can tell; for I never hard the name befoor, in all my born days. Why, says Mr. Thacker, says he, her, is a this parish? Why then, says Rafe, as yo be the parson a the parish, yo be moor liklier to kno, nor I be; howsomever, I cont tell, and if I cold, I has no horders to tell.

Now yo knos I have lived with the Squire, sixteen yeres, come Martlemas, and in all that time, I never seed him speke to no woman but myself. You and me has oftens said he mite take a fansy to Maddam Mereveal, seeing how kindly she behafed to him, wen he brok his leg; but you knos thare has never bin the day, never since he left, that ever he has bin to the Loge; and moor nor that, her name is not Muugummury; so it cant be she. Now, I have bin a thinking, and thinking, and I cant think of noboddy but the young woman that cum sum time ago to borde at Tummas Jennins. Shes a pritty sort of a minikin miss; and we none on us kno who she is, or were she comes from;, and I am sure her name is Mary: and I alis thot she was no better nor she shuld be by her waring her wite gownds; so praps master as bin thick with her, and wunt let his child go to the parish.

But dont menchon no sich thing, I beg on you; for I wold not have it come to his ears for no munney; and I have not tould it to no Chrishtan sole, but Rafe and Betty Tayler, that is come help me to clene the house. But one thing I can tel my master, and that is that I have not bin mistris at the hall so long to be under his lye by at last. No, Ile get every thing in order, and set every thing off to the best advantidge, and noboddy shall have to say miss I do, and Ile cuke the wedding dinner, and Ime a thinking wot it shal be, and how it shall be sot upon the tabel; and then Ile liver up the keys, and leaf my master, and never darken his doors agen; and if I can see ever a sober,

stiddy, tidy young man, that has saved some monny, and wants a industruss wife, praps I may marry; and if I dont Ile keep a scule, and larn children to rede and spel, and nit and so. Thank God I has not lived so long in my plase, but Ive saved a little munny miself, and I knos I am a pretty good scollard.

Muster Henry is a dear, swete, young gentleman. It will go to my hart to leve you and him; and I likes poore Ralfe verry wel, and so I does Carlo; and my master, himself, is not much amis, wen you are at home, to luck ater us, astead of he. I am shure I shal cry to leav you all: but wot con a boddy do? for I never wil stay to be nocked and pooled about by sich a mistris as her, thats curtain.

I did not think I cold have stayed to rite sich a long lettar; for wot with sweeping, and doosteng, and skowering, and thinking, I am at my wits end. I runs up stares twenty times in an hour, and afore I gets to the top, I forgets wot for. So no more at present from your wel whisher and feller sarvent,

MARTHA STABLE.

Letter 21. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALE

Winterdeal, May 23, 1812.

Honorit Cur,

Hopping these wul find yo in gad yelth, as threw marsy I be at this time, I be gooin to tel yo The neues; tho I do suppose as it goos with Misis Mathers, hur wul save me the troubbel; let a human alone for that. If yo dos not no, yo wul not gess o sevin yere. Mastr be gooin to be morrid. I tuk the banes a mattremony, mi own self, this mornin to the parsun, for un to be acksd a the chorch with Mary Mundgumbrey; and us conna find out, for the blood on us, whoever hur may be. Misis Mathur thinks as how it be the pratty young homan as be at Jennins, becos her be a tite wench, and nobody do no hur: for my part, I did think it must be Madam Merriwool, seein as how he binna akwinted with no othur o hoomankind, and I thot as hur mut change hur name o purpuss to hav im; but I went to the blacksmiths just now to get a hoss shod, and the willrit says as how a hooman cenna chang hur name till her be afore the pareson; and so it conna be she. Dik Morris said it must be som Lunnon lady, an mastr wos gon to fatch hur; but the wilrit sad, yo grate fewl, how can that be? this binna itha porish o Lunnon, be it; and the parsun tould Rafe, here, both o this porrish, didnt he, Rafe? That he did, says I, an it must be a nashon lung porrish, to rech from here to Lunnon; and then I up and told um wot Mather did say about the wench at Jennens; but, arter all our argleing, we wun fain to leav it as us fun it.

Now I be a think in that, as Master allis insenses you of every thing, I shad lik to here yor vardit, an if yo wood but rite a few lines, just to let a boddy a letel into the lite o things, I shad tack it very kindly on you; becase wy, as the parsun imself donna no nothin about it, I shad be the wisist mon a the porrich; and I wul gee yo my word noboddy shuld na no it.

For my part I mus nids say I be glad as mastr begooin to be morrid; for us man ha sum maids about the house; and I hops they moy be pratty, an we shal leed a more merryer lif an have better dooins. Pure Mathar kiks and winces, an conna abare the noshon of having a mises, an moor speshally the wench at Jennins; an hur do soy hur wull hop the twig. But I do no wat be wat; an uf I cood stoy e my phase as it has bin, I anna leaf it wen it be better: and dear Mister Mendale I hops yo wul considder on it, an not tak bug, an purtend to think a leevin on us: for I do not no wot upon Gods yarth us shud do without yo; for yo be lik, as aboddy ma soy, to a good stout paling, as kips the hoolf from the ship, wich be all at prison from

Yore's to commend,

RALPH RUSSETTING.

Letter 22. TO MISS CASTLEMAINE

Rovenhill Lodge, May 28, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

Mr. Henry Winterdale called upon us this afternoon and delivered a letter to my mother. She retired to her dressing−room to read it, and he shook hands with us both Give me joy, said he: we are brother and sisters. I have received a letter from my father, in which he formally announces his intention of marrying whom shall I say? for I know.

I coloured scarlet deep. Say the truth, replied I I like either that or nothing.

So do I, rejoined Henry. But I must only speak it to you, at present; for my father has taken the extraordinary resolution of having the banns of marriage published in the church, instead of being married with a license, and he has cautioned me not to give any information on the subject. I sent the banns, this morning, to Mr. Thacker, and no two people in the village are together at this moment but are endeavouring to find out the lady.

I wish she may be found out, said I.

Why so, demanded he? If her ladyship and my father choose to keep the secret till they go to the church, it concerns only themselves. Were I in her place, as she is known here only by the name of Mereval, I would not be called Montgomery; but would sink both names together in that of Winterdale.

It would save part of the shame of acknowledging deceit, said I.

Surely you give it too harsh a name, said Henry. If Lady Montgomery lays aside her rank, and lives in an obscure country village, she imposes upon nobody; she passes, not for greater, but for less than she really is. How many kings and great personages have traveled incognito without ever having been accused of deceit! I hope, Miss Mowbray, continued he, addressing himself to my cousin, that you are not one of them, and that I may not hereafter discover you are of too high a rank for me to claim you as my sister.

No, said Eleanor, I am the daughter of a worthy clergyman, and the sister of Sir George Montgomery. I have been brought up in a village as retired as this. I have visited only the neighbouring families, and I have seen no amusements but a concert, a ball, or a play, at the next country town. I had, therefore, no acquaintance to shun. On the contrary, I wished to see the great world; and, as I am now my own mistress, I requested Lady Montgomery to permit me to board with her. It happened she was then withdrawing from it; and my inclination to enter into the gay scenes of London gave place to my desire to live with my cousin, between whom and myself there has been a great affection from our infancy. It is not one of the least agreeable ideas that present themselves to my mind, on the approaching marriage of Lady Montgomery, that I shall still be allowed to make one of her family nor am I, added she, in a lower voice, insensible to the pleasure of your making a part of it.

Henry almost forgot his system of equality. He seemed to devour every word that Eleanor uttered, and when she had ended, his answer came unfinished from his tongue; so inarticulate that we knew not what it was. I relieved him from his embarrassment by saying, Of one thing be assured, Henry, that whatever dissimulation you may discover in the Montgomeries, there is none to be found in Miss Mowbray. She has never been other than she seems, artless truth and candour personified.

Henry had now sufficiently recovered himself to hold the balance even. He said it was impossible for either of us to lessen the great regard he felt for us; or the pleasure he should derive from our being inmates of the same house.

I wonder whether your great gates will open to receive us, said I.

I hope not, said Eleanor; Mr. Winterdale's habits are so confirmed that, if I were Lady Montgomery, I should be very careful to make no innovations, but such as were indispensable.

It is very extraordinary, said I, that none of us have ever caught a glimpse of the mansion. It seems to me to be surrounded by a spell, like the palace of the sleeping beauty; and I should not be surprised if, when the fence has opened to admit the future lady of the castle, it should close again, to exclude her followers.

'If that should prove the case, said Eleanor, we will get some old duenna to look after us, and we will remain at the lodge.

The revolution that will be effected in our small family, by the introduction of females, is so uncertain that I can neither comprehend or anticipate it, said Henry. I can form no idea of the consequences it will produce; and it seems so remote from every thing I know to be fact, that I have some difficulty in believing it,

I expect, said I, that the very doors will start off their hinges with surprize, at our entrance, and that the ladies in your family pictures, if you have any, will jump down from their frames, to hail the appearance of some of their sex.

I can truly affirm said Henry, that I never saw a woman enter the doors, but our female servant; and two others, who preceded her, when I was a boy; and I believe that no other woman ever has entered them, since the death of my respected mother.

I wonder, said I, that you are not petrified, and your father *brutified* by such a way of life! I declare I am afraid to come among you! I have only yet seen you abroad, in the society of Christians: what you may be in your own den I dread to think of!

Not so savage as you seem to fear, replied Henry. We preserve something of the manners of men, as well as the forms. That my father's wife will make a reform in the interior of the house, I believe, and hope; but I think the observation dictated by Miss Mowbray's good sense, respecting caution, would be well worth attending to. I cannot tell, or even guess, where my father will be conformable, or where inflexible: I only know he is not accustomed to contradiction.

Miss Mowbray was certainly very right, said I. 'You know she and I shall be only two pretty little cyphers in the family; but were I in my mother's place, I would no more touch one of the smallest habits of such a man, than I would run my fingers into one of the prickly, poisonous hedges of India. I should think it a deadly sin to alter the form of his night cap.

Do you think, said Eleanor, that we may be permitted to bring our piano forte with us?

Do I think I live, exclaimed Henry. Is it possible to doubt, that you are to employ and amuse yourselves as you please! I have already found out a domicile for you, added he, which I hope will not be unpleasant. The front of Winterdale Hall is the only part that is not enclosed by fine venerable wood. In the centre of this, on the first floor, is the drawing−room; and, on one side, is a large room, communicating with two smaller. These I have destined for my sisters. The view from all the windows is charming, extending over the distant country to the Welsh hills. The furniture is rich, old, and massive, and has never been made use of in my memory. I have given

orders for its removal; imagining you would prefer your own, as being more modern and convenient. One of these apartments will make a drawing−room you can call your own. I have not been altogether free from a selfish motive in my arrangement; for I hope that, into this, you will sometimes do me the favour to admit me; and if you give your piano forte a place in it, it will afford me a gratification as exquisite as it will be new. Nothing could give me more pleasure, continued he, than to adorn these apartments with all that I could conceive would be useful or agreeable to you; but you know I have not the power.

We thanked this excellent young man, almost with tears of gratitude; and assured him we were provided with every thing of the kind he alluded to. Tea was then brought in; my mother joined us; and not the least notice was taken of the intended union of the two families.

So far, my dear Harriet, my mother goes on triumphantly. But Mr. Winterdale is in London: in the place, where, if he fall into any company, he may hear a reason given for the sudden disappearance of Lady Montgomery, that he has not dared to think of; where, if he have dealings with any fashionable tradesman, he may be told, on mentioning her name, that she is in his debt. Her security rests upon his way of life. Though London is familiar to him, it is the streets, not the inhabitants; and if he have purchases to make, he will probably go to a cheaper market than she did. He lodges in some street near the Strand.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL

Letter 23. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, May 30, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

We have had a most serious alarm this morning. We were all three sitting together after breakfast, when Robert entered the room, and told my mother that a person below wanted to speak to her upon business, and refused to send up his name.

Who can want to speak to me, exclaimed my mother, with surprise, and some confusion! What is he? What does he look like?

He is ill−looking enough, Madam, answered Robert, and rather shabby than otherwise; but he has boots on, and a stick in his hand.

Tell him, said my mother, I never admit any body I do not know.

The servant left the room, to deliver the message. He returned in a few minutes, and told my mother that the man said it did not signify telling his name, for the lady did not know him; but that he was sent by a person whom she knew very well, and that he could deliver his errand to nobody but herself.

My God, cried my mother! what shall I do! The oddity of this fellow has fluttered me so that I cannot see him. Charlotte, continued she, do you attend me; and Eleanor, my dear, do speak to him for me, and tell him I am not well. Bid the man come up, said she to Robert, and do you wait in the hall.

We both understood her, in a moment, and Eleanor said, I am afraid I shall make a bad substitute. An untruth I cannot tell; and I shall give evasive answers with a very ill grace.

My dear Eleanor, said my mother, do what you can to serve me, in your own way. I do not desire you to act contrary to your principles.

We then left the room.

What were now my feelings? Did I wish, as I had told Henry, that Lady Montgomery might be found out? I am afraid not. If truth must prevail, I own I wished it might be in another manner, and at another time. Do not, from this, impeach my former veracity. What I said to Henry was from the impulse of the moment, and was perhaps more than duty to my mother would have permitted me to say.

We were not long in suspense. In about ten minutes Eleanor rang the bell and Robert ushered the mysterious stranger down stairs. Would you believe it, my dear Harriet? the man was a beggar! one of those common, tramping beggars, that never shew themselves twice in a place!

Robinson tells us, that she has several times seen families thrown into confusion by this sort of gentry. Their method is this. When they arrive at a village, they go to the public house: there they sit, and by dint of enquiries, and pretended knowledge of persons, they find out the name and connections of every family in the neighbourhood. They then enter the houses successively, and pretend urgent business with the master or mistress. They will take no repulse from servants; and when they are admitted, they introduce themselves by recommendations from such as they suppose the friends of the person they are speaking to.

Robinson says she once lived with a lady who had several times ordered these *soi−disant* men of business to be shewn into the dining parlour, on the ground floor, and had gone down stairs, herself, to meet them. One had been desired to wait upon her by a lady whom she know very well, by name, and whom it was very probable she might have been acquainted with; but it so happened, that she had never spoken to her in her life. Here Mr. Intelligencer had palpably got upon a wrong scent. Another brought her a message from a friend at Bath; but he had unfortunately forgotten her name hoping, no doubt, that the lady would furnish him with it; but she happened, unluckily for him, to be certain, that she had no friend whatever at Bath.

But, to return to the gentleman who was going to be introduced to Eleanor. A young man, of very unfavourable appearance, dressed in a blue coat and pantaloons, and a white waistcoat, not very clean, entered the room; and, making his bow, said, I presume you are not Mrs. Mereval, Ma'am?

Eleanor said she was not; but that whatever he had to say to Mrs. Mereval, he might say to her.

He then came up close to her, and, with an air of secrecy, said, I beg your pardon, Ma'am, for intruding. You have not the honour to know me.

Indeed I have not, said Eleanor; but though you are a stranger to me, I am ready to hear your business.

I am very sorry to trouble Mrs. Merevale or you, Ma'am, upon such a business; but it is not my own fault, said the man.

Be so good as to let me know what it is, said Eleanor.

I beg your pardon, Ma'am, replied he: I was desired to call upon Mrs. Mereval. It is necessity that obliges me to do it!

At whose desire do you come, and what do you want? said poor Eleanor, trembling.

I was desired to come by several ladies in the neighbourhood, said the man, who all told me what a very kind and good lady Mrs. Mereval was, and that she would be sure to do something for me, if I could but see her. I am not used to be troublesome, Ma'am; but I am in very great distress; and if you would be kind enough to represent my case to Mrs. Mereval, or have the goodness to consider it yourself, Ma'am, I should think myself very much obliged to you, Ma'am.

Eleanor felt relieved in a moment; but, as her fears subsided, her indignation rose. Is it possible demanded she, that you can have the audacity to insist upon penetrating into people's apartments on such business as this! If you had sent up your request by the servant, you might have been relieved; but you may be assured, that neither Mrs. Mereval or myself have any thing to bestow on such daring intrusion; and you may be thankful that there are no gentlemen here at present, or perhaps you would not have got off so cheaply.

The man then began to be abusive, and told Eleanor that he was sure she was no lady; that she was only the lady's maid, dressed in her mistress's cast cloaths; and that the lady herself would have given him something. Eleanor made no answer; but, ringing the bell, desired Robert to shew the man down stairs, and see him out of the house immediately.

We returned from our hiding place, and laughed at our fears, now they were over. But, as there are stocks in every parish in England, do not you think they would be proper resting places for such vagrants as this?

We have had another visit since I wrote last, which should have taken precedence of this, if I had given them in their proper order; but my mind was so engrossed by the man of business, that I could not help introducing him first.

On Sunday, straight from church, came Mr. and Mrs. Thacker, and Mr. Sharp, who is still at the parsonage. Scarcely were they seated, when Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp began the one to attack my mother, the other, Eleanor and me. What an amazing thing, cried one! Did you *iver* hear the like in all your life, cried the other! Could you have supposed it *possable,* said the first? Could you *iver* have thought of any *sich* a thing, said the second? as Mr. Winterdale's going to be married? said the lady? and *nubbody* can give the least guess in the world, who he is going to have, said the gentleman! and to have the banns published in the church, said the parson!

At length Mrs. Thacker gained the victory, and went on. Can you tell us, my dear Mrs. *Merewle,* who the lady is? For my part, I think she is *wery wentersome.* I'm sure, if I was single, and had not a bit *of fortin,* I would not think of marrying such a *feller* as him. What signifies his *fammaly* and his estate, and his hall, and his park! he'll never let a lady have a *morsel* of comfort, and nobody can *wisit* her, and she can have no society. I'm sure I would as soon trust myself alone with a bear as I would with him. He's the most shocking, abominable *creter* in the creation!

Nay, now, aunt, now, said Mr. Sharp, you are too severe. You must allow Mr. Winterdale to be *hooman.* To be sure, I *niver* spoke to the gentleman in all my life; but I have met him, both *a* foot and *a* horseback, and I *niver* saw any *think* so very abominable about him: nay, I think he is rather a little *handsomish.* Indeed I shall be *necessiated* to take up the cudgels, in favour of us poor gentlemen, if you run against us so; for I'm sure you ladies can make your own sides good at any time. I'm certain there's women in the creation far *inferor* to Mr. Winterdale. He pays *ivery* one their own, and *niver* gets drunk.

That's all the good you can say of him, said Mrs. Thacker, in reply to this champion of his sex; but there's something more than that necessary to make a lady happy. If a gentleman did run a little into debt, as many *wery* fine gentlemen do; and if he was a little intoxicated now and then, as some fine gentlemen are; I had rather have him, ten times over, if he would let me dress in the fashion, and go to public places, and keep what company I pleased, and spend what money I pleased, than I would have such a curmudgeon as Mr. Winterdale, who does

nothing but scrape money together, and keep folks at a distance.

But, my dear, said Mr. Thacker, while you are talking in this manner, you forget that the purport of our visit was, to inquire whether Mrs. Mereval knew any thing of the intended bride.

No, I don't *forgit*, answered the lady; I should have come to it bye and bye; but you gentlemen never like to hear any body speak but yourselves. Have not you been talking this *wery* day, in your pulpit, and your desk, for an hour or two together, and nobody *never* said one word to interrupt you? and now, when we come to a little *priwate conwersation.* I think you ought to leave it to me. And so, my dear Mrs. *Merivle*, do you know who this Mary Montgomery is?

I do, replied my mother.

Well! said Mrs. Thacker, we are the luckiest people in the world.

Well! said Mr. Thacker, you know it was I that advised you to ask Mrs. Mereval.

Well! said Mr. Sharp, it is the very *fortunatist* thing that *iver* I knew in all my life.

Pray; said Mrs. Thacker, who is she?

That is a question not so easily answered; replied my mother; for, Mr. Henry Winterdale told us under the most positive injunctions of secresy.

Why; you cannot be so *ill−natered*, certainly, said Mrs. Thacker, as not to tell *us;* your *wery* particular friends. You may depend upon it, it shall go no further.

My mother was silent.

It would not be right to break your word, said Mr. Thacker; but you may just give us a hint; or let us guess, and tell us when we are wrong.

But, Mr. Thacker, said my mother, the promise required of us was, to answer no questions; for Mr. Winterdale foresaw, as well as yourself, that if we were to answer in the negative to all false conjectures, our silence might, at last, divulge the truth.

Then the young ladies know, as well as yourself, said Mr. Sharp?

They do, replied my mother.

Then, now, my dear, sweet, pretty Miss Mereval and Miss Mowbray, said he, I know I shall get it out of you; for you cannot find in your hearts to be so cruel, as to have the cruelty to deny me. Now, do, pray, tell me who the lady is?

That will not do, said I; you must try again.

Why, what can I say more, demanded Mr. Sharp? I'd marry you if there was but one; but the Doctor here, won't let me have both of you; and you are such dear, lovely, bewitching *angils*, that I can't tell, for the life and soul of me, which I should choose.

You bid high, indeed, now, said I; but still I keep my secret.

And so do I, said Eleanor.

Well, I must confess, said Mr. Sharp, it is the very strangest and *wonderfullest* thing that *iver* I knew in all my life.

Very extraordinary, indeed, said Mr. Thacker three women intrusted with a secret, and not one tell it!

You are always so *sewere* upon *we* ladies, said his wife. The most *extraornary* thing would be to refuse Mr. Sharp; though, to be sure, the ladies don't think he's in earnest.

Some people, said Mr. Thacker, returning to the charge, say that Mr. Winterdale is going to marry a young person at farmer Jennings's ; but I cannot believe it; for I cannot discover that he has ever been to Jenning's, except to speak to the farmer.

My mother was silent.

What signifies mincing the matter, cried Mrs. Thacker. I like to be upright and downright. People *do say*, Mrs. *Merewle*, that its you, and nobody else; and that, somehow or ether, your name is Montgomery; for they say, you are the only person in this parish that Mr. Winterdale is acquainted with.

I durst not look at my mother. But she answered, with great composure, I cannot help what people say; nor does it give me any disturbance. My acquaintance with Mr. Winterdale was neither of his seeking or mine.

There, said Mr. Sharp; you see she can't deny it, *howiver*. We've *catched* you, Ma'am. You can't say it is not you can you?

You forget, replied my mother, that I have promised to say nothing about it.

Well, said Mrs. Thacker, if you can stand that, you can stand any thing, and we must give it up, I believe. We shall all know bye and bye, and so we must have patience But will you give me leave to ask you one question?

As many as you please, replied my mother.

Aye, said Mr. Sharp, you may easily give us leave to ask questions, when you are determined not to answer any in the world.

I shall be very happy to give Mrs. Thacker any information in my power, said my mother, if it is upon a subject on which I am permitted to speak.

Well, you *may* speak to this, said Mrs. Thacker. Do you intend to *wisit* the bride?

Indeed, replied my mother, I have not yet given it a thought. I should suppose it will hardly be expected; for Mr. Winterdale has not even been at the Lodge, to thank me for my trouble during his confinement; but, as you are the vicar's lady, I should certainly visit her, if I were you.

Me! exclaimed Mrs. Thacker. Why don't you know how shockingly he has treated Mr. Thacker! I think it would be *wery* improper for me to notice his *vife.*

I think so too, said the husband.

Mr. Thacker, said the lady, I wish you would mind your own preaching, and not *purtend* to meddle and make with the *wisits* of *we* ladies. Its quite out of your *spere*, I assure you. Certainly Mrs. *Merewle* and *me* are sufficient judges of *them there subjicks*, and you need not take the trouble to give us your opinion.

Since you refer it to me, said my mother, let the gentlemen fight their own battles, and let their wives be at peace. It is probable the intended bride of Mr. Winterdale, whoever she be, has not offended you, and it would be cruel to revenge the wrongs Mr. Thacker has sustained, upon her. In a place where society is so scarce, you may each be glad of an agreeable neighbour; and if the gentlemen do not choose to join you, they may still keep at a distance.

Mrs. Thacker looked highly delighted, both with the advice and the compliment; and after telling my mother she would accompany her, if she should visit the bride of Mr. Winterdale, the subject was dropped.

Thus ended one of the rudest attacks that can assail my mother, unless the discovery should actually be made.

And, after observing that it seemed rather to abate than confirm the suspicions of the Thacker family, thus ends the long letter of

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 24. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Ravenhill Lodge, June 6, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

I have not often mentioned Montgomery to you, though there has not been a week in which we have not frequently seen him. If you were desirous to know the reason, I could give you more than one. First, then, though a constant attention to me has been evident in all his looks and actions, it was never confirmed by words; and secondly, whenever the idea of any attachment on his part came across my mind, I felt my own folly hanging about my neck like a millstone. I will, now however, give you the conversation that passed between us this morning.

Eleanor was in our dressing room, writing a letter, and I was sitting alone, at my needle−work, when Montgomery entered. He drew his chair close to mine, saying, with some trepidation, What an uncommon thing is it to find you alone! Nobody admires Miss Mowbray more than I; but I have often wished her at ten miles distance. She is as inseparable from you as your shadow.

In whose company, demanded I, can I find more pleasure than in Miss Mowbray's?

Pardon me, replied he; I own I was thinking of my own gratification; not your's. I have long wished for this opportunity, and now I am fortunate enough to meet with it, I know not how to avail myself of it.

He stopped. I was silent; but I felt an agitation which scarcely allowed me to breathe. After a moment's pause, he went on.

To be admitted to the degree of intimacy with you, that I have been favoured with, and not to love you, is impossible at least, I have long found it impossible for me. The whole happiness of my life depends upon you;

and, yet, if I might be permitted to ask, with hopes of success, I should scarcely know what to solicit. My only wish, hitherto, has been to make myself agreeable to you; but I should certainly not stop here. My ambition would be to deserve your love, if such desert is in human nature; and my highest felicity would be to obtain it. But I have told you my situation: my father is involved in an uncertain and expensive law suit; and till that be decided, and even unless it be decided in his favour, I have nothing to offer that I could wish you to accept. I can, therefore, at present, only ask for your pity.

I felt totally at a loss what reply to make; but ashamed of my silence, I foolishly muttered something, I know not what, about distress, if it were real, being entitled to pity.

You could not refuse me your compassion on the score of reality, said Montgomery, if you knew what I have felt, and what I feel at this moment.

It would be affectation to doubt your being serious, said I, recovering myself. It would be putting you to the expence of protestations I should not deserve. I have always thought that when a man singled out a woman from the rest of her sex, as the companion of his future days, he paid her the highest compliment in the power of a man to bestow; unless any motives of interest were his inducement. Such cannot be your's; for you know not who I am. I, therefore, think myself much obliged by your good opinion of me.

Are cold, unfeeling thanks, all you have to bestow, demanded Montgomery, in a melancholy accent?

My gratitude is neither cold nor unfeeling, replied I.

Might I venture to hope you could in time, be brought to feel a warmer sentiment, if I should be enabled to ask it? Might I hope to retain a place in your remembrance till that time arrive? Or but that I dare not hope could you condescend to share my fortune and expectations, such as they are?

Young as I am, replied I, and gay as is my natural disposition, I have seen the folly of a life of dissipation, and I have felt how unsatisfactory its best enjoyments are. I am convinced that happiness and peace are only to be found in the heart−felt pleasures of a domestic circle, and the occasional company of a few friends. I could contract my wishes within a very moderate compass.

Give me hopes, then, cried Montgomery, that you will be mine!

Mr. Montgomery, said I, you have acted with a degree of sincerity that called for more openness on my part; but I am so circumstanced that I have not dared to imitate you. My nature abhors duplicity, and even concealment; but I have a confession to make by which I run the risque of annihilating all your sentiments in my favour.

I trembled. Montgomery rose from his seat, and stood aghast.

I own, said he, after some time, that I have wished to know some particulars concerning your family, and I hoped they might have followed the disclosure of my own: but what can I have to fear! To see you, to hear you, to know you, as I have done; who could doubt you? Your very thoughts are painted on your face, before they issue from your lips. If I did not now see your own emotion, I should conclude you were trifling with mine. For God's sake, put an end to my suspense, and if there is a dreadful story, let me hear it!

You shall, said I. I did not mean to have made the discovery so soon; and I enjoin you to keep the secret, till you have my permission to reveal it. Promise me this.

I do, replied he; while he could hardly find breath for utterance.

We are here under a feigned name. Our real one is your own, Montgomery.

His face assumed the strongest expression of surprise and doubt, hope and fear.

I am, indeed, your relation, said I; the daughter of Sir George Montgomery.

He caught me in his arms, and, for some moments, we were both speechless.

Disengaging myself at length, I sunk down on my chair, and, pointing to that he had before quitted, I exclaimed, Oh! if that were all!

What more can heaven bestow, cried Montgomery! You would not have made this acknowledgment, if you had not thought me worthy of it! Tell me the rest another time; and let me feast upon this.

I could not speak. The powers of life seemed suspended; my eyes were fixed, without looking upon any object, and breathing did not seem necessary to my existence: though I was perfectly conscious of my situation. Montgomery was alarmed at my appearance.

Charlotte, my dear Charlotte, he cried, taking my hand, for heavens sake speak to me! Say something, and do not make me tremble for your reason, if not your life.

His words and endearments produced a happy effect. I burst into a violent flood of tears, and, by degrees, became calm.

What more you have to tell me, said Montgomery, be it either now or another time; as you like best; but be assured I have no further interest in it than as it concerns yourself. If your being totally unknown was not an obstacle to my endeavouring to make you mine, no misfortune you may have sustained can have any weight. And, as to guilt, I should as soon suspect the purity of angels.

I am not criminal, said I; but my folly, my imprudence have gone greater lengths than you can imagine. I must tell you now if ever; for I cannot go through this scene again.

Now be it, then, said he, to relieve your mind of the burden which oppresses it; for, before heaven, I avow my firm belief that nothing you can possibly have done can lessen my ardent attachment, and my high opinion of you; founded, as they are, upon such an intimate acquaintance. No, if there had been a particle of deceit in your composition, I must have seen, or suspected it. I must see it now; instead of which your ingenuous mind is struggling with the fear of disclosing something you conceive to be a fault.

I have borrowed large sums of usurers, said I, with a firmness that was the result of all my faculties, collected, to be repaid when I come of age.

Montgomery was thunderstruck.

We have lived in a manner our present resources could not support; and I have anticipated those to come those which, now, may never come.

This, indeed, is what I could not have imagined, said he; but it is incapable of shaking my love, or diminishing my esteem; for it is the fault of your mother; not your own. Is it possible that Lady Montgomery should have permitted her daughter, so young, and living under her maternal roof, to have recourse to such an expedient!

I might endeavour to exculpate myself by laying the blame upon my mother, replied I; and certainly she ought not to have permitted, much less have proposed, so shameful a proceeding; but I was old enough to have judged for myself, and can never be exonerated from the folly of having adopted it. You do not know and may you never know, the consequences of spending more than you have to spend. At first it is mere thoughtlessness, and present gratification, which does not imply any thing wrong in the intention. By degrees, wants become pressing, creditors become clamourous; and means to appease them and extricate one's self are employed, that one would have started from with horror, at the beginning. It is in this, as in all ill courses; the first step leads naturally to others, and each succeeding one is more difficult to retrieve than the former.

What, then, cried Montgomery, must be the praise of a beautiful young woman, of nineteen, followed, as you must have been, by the adoration of our sex, and the envy of your own, to stop short in such a career.

Not so great as you imagine, replied I. That I felt uneasy under these circumstances is certain, and the−reproaches of my own mind were neither few nor small; but how long we might have continued our way of life; or whether I might have been brought by apparent necessity to plunge deeper into the gulph of error; I know not. The trial has happily been prevented. Your father's claim to my inheritance has been most salutary to me. It has opened my eyes at once and my folly, perhaps my guilt and ruin, have stared me full in the face; as what had appeared to me only taking my own before it was due, might, in the end, prove robbery and injustice.

To say you have not committed an error, my beloved Charlotte, said Montgomery, would be to disavow both your feelings and my own; your's, which suffer for it so severely; and mine, which I confess are shocked at the recital. But small is the portion of it that falls to your share. What young girl could rise up, and counsel her mother to be more prudent? What young woman could refuse to participate in the enjoyments which wealth affords to rank and loveliness? The rest, as you justly observe, follows of course. Debts, when contracted, must be paid, and it would accord with your ideas of rectitude to discharge them with money that was undoubtedly your own, but which the law did not, at present, place under your controul. You are not to appreciate the step you took by the unforeseen event of a disputed patrimony.

You are a better apologist for me, said I, than I dare be for myself. I view my folly and its consequences together. But they have had this effect upon my mind, that, with the assistance of Almighty God, whose aid I have fervently implored, I never will again consent to a wrong action, knowing it to be so. I will rather embrace all the calamities that my own indiscretion, or the ill conduct of my fellow creatures may bring upon me.

I could almost say, cried Montgomery, it were better to err, and so repent, than never to have deviated from the right line. Sure I am that you are less likely to err than before; and that my admiration of you is redoubled by your sentiments and conduct on the disclosure of this oppressive secret.

Your approbation is a balm to a wounded mind, said I: I may now, in time, regain my own. But I will have no more confessions to make on my personal account. I will tell you the sums I stand engaged for, that I may not have a second shock to undergo myself, or to prepare for you. I first gave a bond for five thousand pounds, and afterwards for two; and the interest of both is accumulating.

A few thousands more or less, my dear Charlotte, said Montgomery, make little difference. Let us not think of it. Allow me to rejoice in the prospect before me, without reverting to the past. I will not have my happiness interrupted by the consideration of a few thousand pounds.

I turned my eyes upon him, with a grateful smile, and he exclaimed, That is worth them all!

Eleanor then entered the room; and, as she told me afterwards, she perfectly understood, by the countenance of both, that a declaration of love had been made on one side, and of misconduct on the other.

Congratulate me, my dearest Harriet, on my having made this discovery to the man whose esteem I dreaded to forfeit, and that it has, happily, not been productive of that effect. My former conduct is not the less reprehensible; nor my resolves, for the future, less strong; but my present feelings are not to be compared with those I have endured for some time past. I look Montgomery in the face, and say, I fear you not; I have concealed nothing from you; you can now form a just estimate of me, and you regard me not the less. In a word, I seem to have found a protector, where I most feared to meet condemnation.

Surely nobody would be guilty twice that suffered like

Your

CHARLOTTE MEREVAL.

Letter 25. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, June 13, 1812

You will see, my dear Harriet, by the place from whence I date this, that we are become inhabitants of Winterdale Hall, and you will consequently suppose, that the happy knot is tied.

Mr. Winterdale returned from Londale early in last week; but took no notice of my mother; the necessary arrangements being made through his son. It was evident, however, that he had made no discovery to the prejudice of his intended bride. Public conjecture began to be weary as to the lady; and some people went so far as to imagine, that Mr. Winterdale had formed the scheme in derision of the vicar; and had obliged him to publish fictitious banns, when no marriage was intended, that he might be laughed at for his pains.

The preparations at the hall, which consisted of little more than scrubbing and scouring, were thought only a pretence, to give it an air of probability.

This opinion, reaching the ears of Mr. Thacker, gave him some disturbance; and he sent his wife and Mr. Sharp to the Lodge (not daring to come himself), to see if any thing could be extracted from my mother, on the subject.

Pray, said Mrs. Thacker, as soon as she was seated, have you heard the shocking report? So, thought I, all is out, then To be sure, continued the lady, there is nothing that people *vill* not say though, for my part, I don't believe a word of it.

But now, my dear Miss Mowbray, said Mr. Sharp, you *must* know; for I know you know *ivery think* in the world; and now I know you will have the goodness to be so good as to tell us.

It would take up too much time, said Eleanor.

O dear, no, not at all, said Mr. Sharp: I dearly love long stories

I'm sure we shall listen to it with *wery* great pleasure, said Mrs. Thacker.

What! to every thing in the world, demanded Eleanor! I should fatigue you with my unmeasurable wisdom.

Pooh, pooh, you know what I mean, cried Mr. Sharp.

Pardon me, said Eleanor; I have not the least conception of it.

Why, then, said Mrs. Thacker, there's a report all about, that Mr. Winterdale does not intend to be married at all; and that he is only giving my gentleman the trouble to publish the banns on purpose to make a fool of him Now what do you think of *that*?

I am sorry, replied my mother, that this is a subject on which I am not allowed to express what I think.

But you might say *vhether* it is any body or nobody, said Mrs. Thacker. That would be telling no tales.

If it were a matter of opinion with me, as it is with you, I would tell you without disguise, said my mother; but you know it is a matter of fact, which I have promised not to disclose.

I can tell him one thing, said Mr. Sharp; he had better not come to go to make a fool of *my* uncle: he may chance to repent, if he does. My uncle is the vicar of the parish; and, if I was him, I would complain to the bishop of the county.

Mr. Winterdale cannot easily make a fool of Mr. Thacker, said my mother; but he might expose himself to ridicule by attempting it.

Why so I think, said Mrs. Thacker. Every body knows Mr. Thacker's abilities in the pulpit; and he might have had a better living than this, if we could have found out where it was to be had. We did not want the means to come at it. And I *vonder* vhich *vould* be the *vorst;* for to write a lie, and give it the clergyman; or for the poor man to read it, when it was given him! For my part, I think there's no comparison in things.

But, said my mother, I understand the hall is in a bustle; as if a new mistress were expected.

Why there again, rejoined Mrs. Thacker; that's a *wery* unaccountable thing. To be sure, Mr. Winterdale has put himself to the expence of a few brushes and brooms, and has had Betty Taylor to clean but where's any new servants? There is but one woman in the house, and she can't cook and wait upon a lady! Or, suppose the lady was to bring her own maid with her, its morally *impossable* for Martha to do all the rest? Or, suppose she brought the *reckisite* servants, where's the carriage? No lady can exist without a carriage! For my part, I should conceive it the horridest thing upon earth, to be *obligated* to walk on foot I don't mean *no* reflection upon you, my dear Mrs. *Merevle,* that just walk, now and then, to the *vicarage* or the church; but you know, yourself, how shocking disagreeable that *po shay* was, when we went to the Assembly!

It was, indeed, said my mother, and the post boy was still worse.

O, they're a set of abominable wretches, cried Mrs. Thacker!

I'm sure I wonder how any body in their senses dare go to trust themselves with *sich* fellows. They are frequently *incapaciated* to keep their seat, said Mr. Sharp.

When it is considered, said I, that they have no other home than public houses, and no other business, when at home, than to drink, I should hardly expect to find them so sober and orderly as they, in general, are.

It's *wery* true, indeed, said Mrs. Thacker; but it's *vell* for us that Mr. Thacker is not here; for he would call us to order; for you know he is *wery mithodicle,* with being so much used to the pulpit And so, as I was saying, there's so little preparation at the hall, that perhaps it may be all a farce at last.

Of all the men I ever saw, said I, I think Mr. Winterdale has the least genius for farce.

O, you don't know him, cried Mrs. Thacker. Spite would *sarve* him instead of *genus.* But, however, I think, myself, there's somewhat in it; for all you ladies own you are in the secret, and I cannot believe you would all stand by so quietly, and see Mr. Thacker bamboozled, and I think that is a trick Henry Winterdale would not have told you.

You may be assured, said my mother, we could not see any disrespect offered to Mr. Thacker without pain.

Well, you are *wery* good, said Mrs. Thacker; I could not, myself. To be sure I do snap him up a little sometimes, when he will have a finger in the pye; but, for all that, I should not like to see him made the laughing stock of nobody else.

Unexperienced as I am in these matronly matters, I think I could have told Mrs. Thacker, that one way to secure the respect of other persons for her husband would be to shew him respect herself. If she, who knew him best, affected to look down upon him, it would be natural enough for those less acquainted with him to follow her example.

A little more conversation of the same kind concluded the visit.

On our part no preparations were made, either for a wedding or a removal. Our family went on in the same track it had hitherto pursued.

Provisions were laid in for the ensuing week; orders were given, to be executed at a future time; and no servant, except Horton, who had been confidante from the beginning, had any reason to imagine we were interested in the proceedings at the hall.

On Monday morning a post chaise from the town, sent by Henry Winterdale himself, stopped at our door. My mother and I got into it, in our usual morning dresses, and drove to church; and then, and not till then, had our own domestics any cause for suspicion that their lady was to be the bride.

Mr. Thacker had been roused from his bed only half an hour before, and told, that he must marry Mr. Winterdale.

We found the bridegroom, attended by his attorney, waiting for us in the church porch, and the parson already in the church, which Mr.Winterdale would not enter, till necessity obliged him. Mr. Foreclose, the attorney, officiated as father; not as the friend of Mr. Winterdale, for he has not one in the world; but as his only acquaintance.

Mr. Thacker was extremely agitated by the presence of his enemy. He looked upon him with eyes in which fear and hatred were discoverable, and, at times, his voice faltered, so that his words were indistinct. Mr. Winterdale regarded him with a look of cool, steady defiance, and a kind of inward triumph. My mother was composed and collected.

My own feelings I cannot express. My view of Mr. Winterdale and Mr. Thacker, as they regarded each other, inspired me with horror two fellow creatures, christians, neighbours, I ought to add, gentlemen, meeting with the rancour of two rival bull dogs; and, impelled by a sort of instinctive hatred, ready to growl at, and worry each other. For my mother, my only sentiment at that moment, was compassion. Culpable though she be, and culpable in her motives for this marriage; yet I could not help trembling for her, when I saw her solemnly resign herself into the clutches of such a ferocious animal.

I looked at Mr. Winterdale, and at his still beautiful bride, and asked myself what is there in him that can induce her to give up independence, even accompanied, as it ought to be, by obscurity; for ills she knows not of, and may be doomed to suffer! and for ever! at least, so long as they both shall live! There is something so awful in the

idea of this irrevocable sentence, that I should find all the love my heart is capable of, which I believe is not a little, necessary to support me under it.

By the bye it is fortunate for us creatures, who are generally destined to go through the world in pairs, that we are drawn towards each other by a stronger principle than reason. Cool, dispassionate reason would discover so many faults, and foresee so many evils, that we should hardly ever come together.

The ceremony ended, Mr. Winterdale put something into the hands of Mr. Thacker. What it was, I know not; but he boasts it was the precise sum exacted by law, and glories in the opportunity of affronting the parson.

My mother and I drove to the Hall; she exulting in the success of her plans, I deploring their probable consequences to both parties. Mr. Winterdale and his companion walked back, as if nothing had happened, only as they were there to receive us, it is probable they walked a little faster. Henry paid his compliments of congratulation, and then set off for Eleanor. Breakfast was brought in, in a very creditable style, though no intimation had been given to the servants of the coming of their new lady; and Mrs. Martha contrived to send us in a dinner, which did honour to her skill as a purveyor and a cook.

Eleanor and I were never weary of admiring this fine old mansion, and the heavy gilt furniture, and magnificent looking glasses it contains. The most modern date their establishment in the house from the marriage of Mr. Winterdale's father; and the others trace their origin to different generations of remote antiquity: but what charmed us most was our own apartments. The view from the windows is inconceivably fine; the bedchamber is spacious enough for a ball room, and the drawing and dressing rooms would each contain a moderate family. After the furniture had been removed by Henry's direction, the rooms appeared so forlorn, that when it had gone through the different processes of cleaning and airing, he ordered every thing to be replaced, leaving it to our choice to retain, or discard it, as we pleased.

Though there is nothing in which modern inventions have a more decided advantage over ancient usages than furniture, and the decoration of houses; yet we thought time had given these venerable inhabitants of Winterdale Hall a kind of prescriptive right, we did not choose to invade. Every thing was whole and grand, though somewhat tarnished. We kept our drawing rooms without making any other innovation, than banishing a huge marble table, to make way for our piano forte; we added a few conveniences to our dressing room; and we were content with the comfortable refuge our thick damask curtains afforded us, in our immense bedchamber.

My mother sent for poor Martha on the day of our arrival at the Hall. She appeared before her with fear and trembling. After giving due commendations to the dinner she had provided, my mother told her she should still keep her place as housekeeper; but, as the family was now enlarged, it would be necessary to have assistance, and that her own cook and housemaid were coming, who would be under her direction. The honest creature actually burst into tears, and quitted the room, praying God to bless her mistress.

Mendall is left behind in town, to transact some business which his master could not stay to finish.

On Tuesday, while the remnants of our possessions remained at the Lodge, under the protection of our man, Montgomery coming to pay his usual visit, was, by my mother's order, directed here. Eleanor and I were alone when he was announced. He entered the room with astonishment in his countenance, and seemed in doubt whether he should mention the cause of it.

You may speak, said I. Eleanor is *me*.

I am told, said he, that your mother is become the mistress of this house.

It is very true, replied I, Lady Montgomery is become Lady Winterdale.

Then the grand secret you did me the honour to confide to me, is known to all the world.

It is of course, known who we are, answered I, but the worst part of the secret is yet known only to yourself.

Pardon my rudeness. cried he, I am jealous of your confidence, as the only pledge I possess of your regard.

I should not have made a wanton, needless confession of my errors, a confession to me so painful, to a man for whom I felt no regard. I concealed nothing from you relating to myself; and I was not sorry, when the conflict was past, that your disinterested attachment led me to the avowal, before we acknowledged ourselves to the rest of the world; but I had no right to reveal the intentions and prospects of my mother.

Dearest Charlotte, said Montgomery let me say, my dearest Charlotte I despise myself for feeling a moment's dissatisfaction at your conduct. What I know is so admirable, that I ought to admire what I do not comprehend.

One thing only remains for you to know, said I; and, as it relates to my mother, it should not, according to my own maxim, be told by me; but, as it cannot now frustrate her schemes; and, as it must shortly be known to Mr. Winterdale; I had rather you were made acquainted with it by myself, than by the uproar it must soon occasion. My mother is indebted to every tradesman employed about her house and person; her real motive for. retiring into this country, and assuming the name of Mereval, was to elude her creditors; and she has married Mr. Winterdale, without informing him of these circumstances. Ask me not whether I excuse or condemn such proceedings. Different duties forbid me to do either. I can only say that the last I endeavoured by every argument in my power to prevent.

O, Charlotte, said Montgomery, no duty forbids me to blame Lady Winterdale; and from my soul I do it. Inattention may form a plea for contracting her debts, and necessity may palliate her running from them; but to throw them upon Mr. Winterdale, unknown to himself, is a deliberate fraud. I now see in a stronger light than ever, the guidance and example by which you were led astray; and I see my charming cousin, shaking off the fetters of maternal authority, when used to an ill purpose; and contrary to the laws of nature and custom, becoming the monitress of her mother.

The conduct of Lady Winterdale cannot appear to you in a more heinous light than it does to Charlotte, said Eleanor; though duty to her mother checks her words. She is under no restraint when speaking of her own, which, is far less deserving of reprehension.

As I found, if the conversation continued, I must either listen to my mother's condemnation or my own praise, I put an end to it, by introducing Eleanor to Montgomery, as another cousin, in the same degree with myself; and while he was congratulating himself on his newly found relations, my mother and Mr. Winterdale entered the room.

Montgomery paid his respects to her with a coldness and reserve I had never seen before. She received him with perfect ease and good humour, and introduced him to Mr. Winterdale, who preserved a gloomy aspect, and said as little as could be said on the occasion. My mother did not seem to notice it; but told Montgomery that now there were gentlemen in the family, to make it agreeable to him, she hoped he would often take his dinner with us. Mr. Winterdale, in return, seemed not to notice the attention of his lady to her visitor, and took care not to add to the weight of the invitation by any thing of his own.

The rest of the week has passed on in a family party, interrupted only by another visit from Montgomery, who sat an hour with us, without seeing Mr. Winterdale. This morning, at breakfast, my mother began her first attack upon her husband, by desiring Eleanor and myself to be in readiness to accompany her to church to−morrow.

To church! exclaimed Mr. Winterdale, and started off his seat.

Certainly, replied my mother, I have all my life been accustomed to go to church.

You did not go to church, while I was at the Lodge, said Mr. Winterdale.

No, replied my mother, I gave it up for the pleasure of attending you.

Surely, said Mr. Winterdale, that motive ought to influence you still.

Pardon me, said my mother, the case is altered. I could no more devote my time to nursing a man who was well and sound, than you would choose to break your leg once in two months for the sake of my services. I can only assure you, that if such a misfortune should happen again, I will attend you with the same assiduity as before.

But to go to church, rejoined Mr. Winterdale, is what I could never have supposed you would have been guilty of!

My dear Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, I am truly concerned to hear you give such an epithet to what I consider as a sacred duty.

I have no objection to your sacred duties, replied her husband; but I can never suffer you to enter the church of that pickpocket scoundrel Thacker.

It would be presumption in me, said my mother, to enter into an argument with you on the merits of Mr. Thacker. You have known him longer than I have, and, I dare say, know him better; but, let his character be what it may, I should think his instructions from the pulpit must be good. He cannot, certainly, introduce any of his pickpocket notions there.

What signify the instructions of a man whose whole conduct gives them the lie? Are they calculated to make any impression on his hearers, when they make none upon himself?

I am not one who look so far. If a revengeful man preach forgiveness of injuries, I consider myself bound to follow his precepts, rather than his example. If his doctrine have not a proper influence upon his own life, it ought not to have the less upon mine.

But Thacker's behaviour has been so very outrageous that it is a sin to countenance him, even in his own church. He has exacted tythes beyond all reason, justice and precedent, and brought an action against me, because I refused to pay them.

He bought the living, and wished to make the most of his merchandize. However, I think you were perfectly right not to pay what he had no right to demand.

Yes; but the worst of it was that I was obliged to pay it at last. The Jury gave a verdict in his favour.

That was hard, indeed. I promise you that if I hear him say one word about tythes, in his sermon, I will not listen to it.

Lady Winterdale, do you think I am to be jested out of my fixed abhorrence of that devil of a parson? I have lived within five hundred yards of him these twelve years; and, in that time, nobody has ever dared to speak to me in his favour.

Nor do I said her Ladyship. I think him ignorant, prejudiced, and impertinent, from my own knowledge of him: you say he is rapacious, and I do not see the least reason to doubt it. I give him up to you intirely. Think of him as you do; or still worse, if you please; but, as I shall certainly go to church to−morrow, I depend upon hearing something from him that I may profit by, when I am there.

And you are determined to go to church, said Mr. Winterdale.

I am, replied his lady.

I am loth to quarrel with you in the first week of our marriage, said Mr. Winterdale; or I would swear by the living God you should not go.

Dreadful! exclaimed my mother. You would terrify me beyond expression, if you did. You cannot imagine how it would shock me to have you forsworn! Besides, I love you so much that I shrink from the idea of any thing, which might, possibly, make me love you less.

Take care, said Mr. Winterdale. I am not accustomed to have my commands treated in this light manner.

Commands is such a frightful word, said my mother, that I would banish it from my vocabulary. What would you think of me, if I were to command you to go with me to church?

I could scarcely be more surprized than I am, replied Mr. Winterdale.

Some wives would do it, said my mother; and some husbands would take a pleasure in obliging them; but I require no such thing. I know my duty better, and shall be content with going myself.

Then the devil go with you, cried Mr. Winterdale, and flung out of the room.

Henry had been reading, during this curious dialogue, and Eleanor and I had been very attentive to our needlework. When Mr. Winterdale was gone out, we looked at one another, and then, with some apprehension, at my mother.

My dear Madam, said Eleanor, do not provoke Mr. Winterdale. He has never been used to contradiction, and you do not know the consequence.

Go, go, replied she; you are a little novice. Every one ought to bear contradiction. Do not I bear it? Either he or I must be master; and do not you think it had better be I, who will allow him to do as he pleases, than he, who would not suffer me to have a will of my own? If I gave up so reasonable a thing as going to church, every thing else must follow; and I must be his slave, as well as his wife.

When my mother had left the room, Eleanor, said I, I need not have pitied my mother for having given Mr. Winterdale a power over her: she seems qualified to keep it in her own hands.

A pretty school this for young ladies, said Henry. You will learn how to behave when you are wives.

I am afraid the lessons will be thrown away upon us, said Eleanor; for Charlotte and I have determined not to marry, unless we love our husbands; and surely if her Ladyship loved Mr. Winterdale, she could not exasperate him, and be unmoved herself.

That circumstance is most portentous for my father, said Henry. If he can provoke Lady Winterdale, he may hope for some advantage in his turn: if she keep her temper, I tremble for him. He has not had a fair trial yet,

however; and I think, with you, that nothing but indifference can carry her through it.

At dinner my mother treated Mr. Winterdale with unaffected sweetness and good humour. His surly looks gave way, by degrees, to his common aspect, which is never very far removed from them, and he won his rubber at whist, in the evening, with his usual exultation.

I have written a letter of unmerciful length; but, if you find it too fatiguing, you may serve it as the clergy of old did their sermons take one half now, and reserve the other to a further opportunity. Now I am talking of that, I actually knew a clergyman who preached six and twenty sermons on the attributes of God. Like the ancient task at the game of forfeits, where you love your love with an A because he is Amiable, and you hate him because he is Avaricious, and he took you to the sign of the Angel, and treated you with Apricots, he conducted his Maker through the alphabet. In his first sermon he undertook to prove, what no madman was ever mad enough to doubt, that God was Almighty; in the second, that he was Benevolent; in the third, Charitable; in the fourth, Divine, and so on. When he came to X, he was at a stand and frankly owned to his congregation that there was no word in the English language beginning with that letter. Rather than disappoint them, however, he told them he would give them the sound, instead of the letter, and would that day prove to them that God was Extraordinary.

You may smile at this; but, I assure you, so did not the clergyman. It is an absolute fact; and he preached his sermons with true christian piety; though, perhaps, not without some admiration of his own ingenuity.

For fear I should add to the length of my letter by something else which I had no intention to say, I will hasten to tell you that I am, in my own name and person,

Your's, most truly,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 26. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Winterdale, June 14, 1812.

Dear Muster Mendall,

This is to lett you to kno that last Mundy as ever was, my master got up as yousal; and drest himself as yousal, and Muster Fourcloaths call'd afore brecksfust, as you kno he do sometimes, and they went out to gather, and no body thot nothin about it. And presently Rafe coms runing, and out o wind, and he sed says he, my masters gooin to be marrid, and hees gon to church, now, and theres a sheas gon to Mrs. Merryveals, and now the cats out o the bag; but how the devle hur comd to be Mary Mundgumery, I be not wurthy to kno.

Gad! I dident stay a minnit. I laid my cacks a rising, and put the fyr in the huven, and I bids Rafe grind the Koffe, and cut me a plait o ham, and fatch me sum hegs, and lay the cloth, and hacks no queshtons. And wen master comb back, he just sed your ladys a comming, and that was hall. And so they comd to brecksfust, and Miss Mowbry and hall; and I thoght to miself, thinks I, wot shal I doo? Howsever I diddent let the grass grow under my fit, and I sent um in a hansomish dinner considuring. And so in the arternoon Madam sent for me up stares, and I was fritened out o mi verry witts, thats the truth. But I must tel you that shes a lady by rite and title, and we be all to call hur your Ladyship, only I be a litel aukardish at it at furst. But, as I was a telling on you, wen I got into the drawn room I downrite quacked for fere; and says my Lady says she, Misis Stable, says she, you sent us in a verry nise dinner, and you sholl be my house skipper; but you can't possible do all the wurk yourself, now, and you shall have my cuck and housmade under you, and Ile speke to your master to raise your wage.

God in heven bles you, my Lady says I, Ile do the best as ever lys in my power to sarve your Ladyship, by nite or by day, says I: and I was reddy to jump out a my skin for joy; but I don't kno whatever it was culd ale me, I was sich a fool that I bostid owt a crying, and was fost to leve the rum. And so I sits at the hed of the tabel, in my hone rum, and every boddy cals me Misis Stable; only Rafe pops out Martha now and tan; but I shall larn him better manners in time; but my master and my Lady and the gentlefokes call me Stable; but my dear Muster Mendall, you may call me Martha, as yousall.

To be shure, Madam God furgive me, my Lady, I mean is a good swete lady, and I shal lov hur the longest day I has to live; but she has bin to church to day, nolus volus, wether my master wold or no, and, moor nor that, she broght Muster Sharp and Madam Thaker hom with her to dinner. I wunder how she darst. Robbut said the Squir lucked plagy sulky; but we sarvants must here and see and say nothin; tho I must nedes say it was raythe howdashus on her; but thats nyther hear nor thear.

As for Rafe hes quit and clear beside himself. His allis arter Jenney house made, and crys her up for a booty. For my part, I thinks hurs no grate things; for all he macks sich a fuss with her; nothin but a letel red and wite, that's hall; but he must have his fling. In my mind eyther Robbut or Tommus is as fur afore hur as lite from dark. But, dere Muster Mendall, I does not think none on um at all compairable to you, wich is all at present from

Yours, to comend,

MARTHA STABLE.

Letter 27. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDILL

Winterdale, June 14, 1812

Honorit Cur,

This coms with mi humbel sarvice, hopping to find yo in good yelth, as thro marcy I be at this prison, an too lett yo to no as mastr be morrid, an as I was the first as fun it out; an Maddum Merrywool tornd out to be Mary Mundgumberry at last: moor sham for hur I sy; for I ood nevr care hoo nod as I was Ralph Russetting. But hur be a lady o kwollity, for all hur havbin ashamed o hur nam, an hur be to be called, my lady; but I can hordly put my mowth e form to sy my lady this, an my lady that, and my lady toother; but I sup hose it wull com nay chural ater a wile.

Betwen yo an me an the post, I thinks Maddam be a tarter, an Mastr hay met ooth his mach, an uf they can monitch him, thy has but one moor to fere, an that be the very devl himself. Hur hav had the imporance to goo to chorch to dy, in spite o his tith, an hur hay brot whom Mister Sharp an Maddam Tacker to dinner, an the Mastre lucks nashonly out o sorts, and I thinks hur wool cach it wan thy be gon. Hur donna no the nater on him so wel as yo an me dun, an ma hap hur ma and hur a got the run sow by the here; but I bleev as these kwollity ma doo things as common wimen darnt, an uf hur a these tricks, hur hav moor.

As for me, I be as happi as the dy be long; and Mather have got purfarmunt, an eets rost bif, and a nothing to doo but luck ater the mayds, an ge out shugger an plums, an a got to be Missis Stable. I thinks, uf thy com to that, as I shud be Mister Stable, seein as how I lucks ater the hossis; but thy cawn me Ralph, as oosal. And Jinny the hous maid be a mortal pratty wench, yo no, an mortal kind harted, an hur do run soo e my yed that somtims I hardly do no a shool from a curry com. Cuck lucks plagy sowr about it, and do hordly gee me saut to mi porritch; but I donna care for shee.

Mastr be ten times bettr to plese then he wos afore; for he do beggin to find he binnot allis to hay his one wy, no moor nor the rest o monkind, and I do fettle him without much grumblin. We kip a rare good howse, an it wul but hold; an Robud an Tomus be booth gain men, and wul gee won a lift at a pinch. As to the ladys maydes, thy carrin thur yeds abov a boddy the normost hite as evr wos, and torn up thar nosis as uf a boddy wanna worthy to whip their shoos: but wot care I! let urm kip thur seckund hondit came bricks, an jack or nots, and give me Jinney, in a good holesum oolen petty cot; for I donna like sich varmont. The too yung misis be havin kinder be hafe, an wen thy has onny thin to sy to a boddy, God bles thar pratty fasis, thy smile, an luck so goodhumered, that I ood run forty myle to sarv um. So no moor at prison from yurs till jeth,

RALPH RUSSETTING

Letter 28. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Winterdale, June 14, 1812.

I was married last Monday; but, instead of wishing me joy, I desire you will help me to curse the fool that ever expected happiness with a woman. With regard to money matters, I am not much mistaken. It is true I keep an extravagant table; I expected it, and I am paid for it. But my wife! The moderate, frugal, retired, complying Mrs. Mereval, alias Lady Montgomery, alias Madam Deviless, turns out to be the very reverse of all she pretended to be! having fastened me in her claws, she shews her cloven foot, already.

The very day after our marriage, she introduced to me a tall, strapping, dashing, young fellow of an officer, a relation of her former husband. I had heard, before, of his being at the Lodge, after one of the girls, no doubt. I gave him a very cool reception: if that does not do, I shall affront him; for I will have no red coats here.

Yesterday she had not only the assurance to tell me to my face that she would go to church, but the impudence to persist in it, contrary to my positive commands, and to laugh at them and me.

To−day she has done worse. She has been to church, and has brought back that scoundrel Thacker's wife and nephew, and placed them at my own table, in defiance of me. I gave them several pills at dinner, which, let them digest as they may. The she−dog had a mind to have worried me, once; but my precious help−mate did not seem to like that, and shewed her teeth, in return. I could curse them and the whole sex together; but, irritated as I am, and most justly, I will not curse upon paper, which might upbraid me when my passion was over. Not that I will ever forgive her! Lady Winterdale, I mean, (I hate to call her by the name.) As for Madam Fish, she is beneath my notice.

I write this while they are cackling in the drawing room. As soon as they march, I shall endeavour to bring her Ladyship to a sense of her duty; by fair means, if I can; and, if these fail, I shall let her know who is master.

Have I been sole director of my own actions, and of every person and thing around me, for five and twenty years; to be bullied, and laughed at by a woman! Have I been sole cock of my own dunghill, and no other cock has dared to approach it, but has retreated with drooping wings; to be flown at, and pecked, by my own hen! and next, perhaps, by her chickens,mild and modest as they look, for I will never trust mildness and modesty more!

I intended Charlotte for Henry, when the law−suit should be decided in her favour, as I mentioned to you before; but, knowing women to be such serpents, I can hardly find in my heart to turn him over to one. However, as there is no way of providing an heir to the estate, but marriage, he must submit to it, as his ancestors did before him. The girl may be as well as the rest, and her fortune will make him some amends.

You will not fail to bring with you an abstract of every document relating to the title of the Montgomery estate. Your presence will be some alleviation of the miseries of

JOHN WINTERDALE

Letter 29. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, June 20, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

There is something in the name of wife which allows privileges unknown to us maidens. A wife assumes a kind of consequence, an intrepidity, a daring, that is totally out of our sphere and practice. It is almost worth while to get married, to see if one should acquire it. I wonder whether it would be pleasant to feel one's timidity, one's fear of offending, and one's desire to please, giving way to a spirit of independence, and a heedlessness whether one pleased or not; and whether this mighty change takes place all at once, or by degrees! I must certainly marry, to find it out; but I think I shall be a little upon my guard that the transformation do not happen too suddenly.

With respect to my mother, it is no new thing. Placed a second time in the situation of a wife, she has only to resume her former manners. I remember her behaviour to Sir George. He had been struck with her beauty, and, when that became familiar, her good humour gave him no cause to repent; and she made him what is called a good wife. But they both loved company and amusements; and, as their tastes were the same, there was little ground for contention. Nothing can be more opposite than her's, and Mr. Winterdale's, whose only passion is to hoard money; a thing she never thought of.

I told you, in my last, of my mother's announcing her intention of going to church. We went; and, when the service was ended, she sent Robert to Mrs. Thacker, to request to speak with her, in her pew. She accosted her with all the freedom of an old friend and proposed taking her to the hall, to dinner. By this time Mr. Thacker had joined us, and we walked out of the church together.

Mr. Thacker, said his wife, Lady Winterdale is so *wasly* obliging, that she *vishes* to take me *vith* her to dinner; but I don't see how I can *possably* go.

Nor I, neither, said her husband.

But if Mr. Winterdale *is* a strange *bein*, I don't know why I should mind him, when her ladyship is so *wery* good as to *inwite* me. It would be very hard, indeed, if a lady might not notice her friends, without asking leave of her husband.

But, besides his constant ill usage, for so many years, you forget the recent affront he has offered me in his marriage.

No, I don't *forgit* it; I remember that *wery* well; but when Lady Winterdale is so kind as to ask me, and it was my place to go, if I had not been asked, it would be monstrous rude of me to refuse.

I wish I could have the pleasure of your company, Mr. Thacker, said my mother; but you men are so obstinate and unforgiving, that I am obliged to let you have your own way. Mrs. Thacker shall not refuse me, however; nor you, Mr. Sharp: for you have more of the gentle spirit of our sex in you, than the boisterous notions of your own.

O, dear, Ma'am, replied Mr. Sharp, I *niver* was one of those cursing, swearing, *robustical* gentlemen, that make *ivery* body afraid of them. I'm sure I am very much obliged to you for your good opinion of me. I should be extremely happy to dine with your ladyship, if Mr. Winterdale was not at home; but really he is *sich* a lonely gentleman that I should be quite frightened to go to visit him, unless it was by his own particular invitation. I should be afraid he would not be partial to seeing of me.

Nothing more likely, said my mother. If my friends wait for his invitation, I must live the life of a hermit, as he does; but do not you think I am able to protect you, if he should look a little sullen?

O, dear, yes, Ma'am, certainly, replied Mr. Sharp, I'm sure I should *niver* be afraid of any *think* in the world, if your ladyship stood by me: but I hope the gentleman won't be very cross.

I will not take upon me to answer for that, said my mother. As you observe, he is not used to company: and it will take some time to reconcile him to it; but, you know, you are not his visitor, but mine.

O, dear, said Mr. Sharp, I always thought that *whativer* was the wife's was the husband's!

That is not the case in London, is it, Mrs. Thacker, demanded my mother? You know, there, if we do not both like the same thing, we each please ourselves.

To be sure we do, said Mrs. Thacker, and so we do in the country. If my husband was such an unnreasonable brute as not to like my *wisitors*, he might shut himself up in his study, and we could do *wery* well without him. I'm sure I shall accompany your ladyship *vith* a *wast* deal of pleasure. I am not afraid of Mr. Winterdale's looks, nor his words neither.

Then why should I be afraid, said Mr. Sharp? I have done *nothink* to offend him! And so, Ma'am I will have the honour of doing myself the pleasure of attending your ladyship, and the young ladies.

When we entered the drawing−room at the Hall, Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, I have prevailed on Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp to dine with us to−day. They expressed some apprehensions that their company might not be agreeable to you; but I assured them you would always be glad to see my friends. Then, turning to his son, without giving him time to reply, she said, Mrs. Thacker, Henry. I need not introduce Mr. Sharp to you; because you have met him at the Lodge.

A conversation then ensued, in which my mother talked with her usual ease; Mr. Winterdale said nothing; and Henry, Eleanor, and myself, rather bore a part, from the idea that it was necessary, than any inclination we felt to speak. Mr. Sharp was really frightened, and said little: Mrs. Thacker said a great deal, to shew she was not frightened.

At dinner my mother shewed a kind attention both to her husband and her guests. Mr. Winterdale was perfectly silent; but his looks were expressive of great displeasure.

When the cloth was removed, and the servants had left the room, Mrs. Thacker began by saying, upon my word, your ladyship managed *wery clewerly*, when Mr. Thacker and we pumped you about the intended bride. When we came to the Lodge we thought it morally *impossable* it could be any body but you; and yet you almost *conwinced* us it was not, for all you did not deny it. For my part, I should have denied it, plump.

I do not like to tell a downright untruth, if I can help it, said my mother.

Mr. Winterdale, who had hitherto not opened his mouth, except for the purposes of eating and drinking, now said, People have no occasion to lye, when they have the impudence of the devil.

As this was addressed to nobody, nobody answered it.

I thought, to be sure, said Mr. Sharp, I could have got it all out of the young ladies. I *niver* was so surprised in all my life. I thought ladies always loved to talk.

When gentlemen talk a great deal, said I, there is less occasion for it.

I must own and confess, resumed Mr. Sharp, that I did use *ivery* argument in my power. Nay, I even went so far, continued he, addressing himself to Henry, as to talk of marrying them; but all would not do: they were as hard as native rocks.

If I had the presumption to think of marrying either, it would not be as a bribe to her, said Henry; but as the greatest happiness that could befall myself.

You may drop the presumption, Henry, said his father, and that is the light in which most men would see it.

O dear, Sir, said Mr. Sharp, and so should I see it. I think there are not two sweeter, *bootifuller, sensibler* young ladies in the world. I do not know their *equils.*

Eleanor and I could not help laughing at our own panegyric.

I beg you will add discreeter, said I. Though discretion is a virtue you do not seem inclined to bestow upon women, you cannot refuse it to us, who kept our secret in spite of all your offers and entreaties.

Ah! said Mrs. Thacker, you have not been tried! You knew Mr. Sharp was only in joke. Let me see the *voman* that could ever refuse him, if he was *serus.*

O dear, Aunt, I wonder at you, cried Mr. Sharp. I vow you make me quite ashamed! I'm sure I don't believe there's *iver* a *bootiful,* sensible, discreet young lady in all the world, that would have me, if I was to ask her.

Eleanor and I silently subscribed to the truth of his opinion.

You are so faint−hearted, said Mrs. Thacker. Don't you know that *faint heart never won fair lady*? If I was as you, I'd strike up to them, boldly.

Women do not want boldness, if men do, said Mr. Winterdale.

A little proper spirit is w*ery* necessary in *vomen,* said Mrs. Thacker, or they might be trampled under foot. *Men* are not all so good natured as Mr. Sharp.

This was a challenge; but Mr. Winterdale made no reply. My mother did. She said, That those men who had not the easiness of Mr. Sharp's temper might have some of the stronger virtues; but that mildness was always becoming in a woman.

Henry's eyes beamed with pleasure at my mother's rebuke of the unfeeling Mrs. Thacker, who seemed a little disconcerted; imagining, at least, that she was paying her court to my mother, by assisting her to train her husband if not invited for that very purpose. She said, When gentlemen behaved themselves like gentlemen, she could be as mild as any body.

And when they do not, said Eleanor, gentleness of manners in a woman may be one of the best means to reform them

Yes, said Mr. Winterdale, You unmarried women talk very prettily about mildness and gentleness, and some of you practice it too; but once get husbands, and you are a parcel of dragons. In future, I should fear to trust the best of you.

When I am married, said I, my greatest pleasure will be to oblige my husband. I would prevent his very wishes. But then I think be ought to sacrifice something to mine. If my compliance led him to seek his own gratification, and exact those attentions as a right, which I should feel such pleasure in paying him spontaneously, the mere doctrine of duty and obedience would not carry me so far as my own inclination would have done without it.

No man above the condition of an American Indian could think of exacting obedience from an amiable, enlightened woman, said Henry.

No, faith, said his father; he ought to be thankful if the amiable, enlightened woman did not exact obedience from him.

If she did it would be worse still, said I.

Much worse, rejoined Mr. Winterdale; but not more unlikely. However, I believe, Charlotte, you are one of the best of them.

O dear, Sir, said Mr. Sharp, pray do not forget Miss Mowbray. I'm sure, if I was obliged to go to say which was the best, I should find it the *difficultest* thing that *iver* I did in all my life.

I can tell you a way to solve the difficulty at once, said I.

And pray what is that, demanded Mr. Sharp?

Find out which has the best fortune, replied I.

That might not be the easiest thing in all the world, said Mr. Sharp.

You have made a very shrewd observation, said I. It is not quite determined what mine is to be; but, when it is settled, I appeal to Mr. Winterdale, if that should not decide the preference, when all other things are equal.

It should, said Mr. Winterdale, and I believe it may be decided now; for there can be no doubt of your title to the Montgomery estate.

Does any body dispute your title? asked Mrs. Thacker.

A distant relation does, replied I, and the affair is now in Chancery.

O, shocking, exclaimed Mrs. Thacker. Well! I *wow* its most abominable! And so you don't know yet whether the estate is your own or no?

None of us can tell; answered I, till my Lord Chancellor has the goodness to inform us; and I am told he sometimes makes people wait a long while for such information.

O dear, O dear! I'm sure I pity you, said Mr. Sharp. If I had a Chancery suit, I sho'uld *niver* sleep o'nights.

Miss Montgomery has put you in a way then, said Henry, to determine which of the two ladies you like best.

O dear, O dear! she has, indeed, said Mr. Sharp. I'm sure I would not marry any lady in all the world, with a Chancery suit.

Why not, Sir? said Mr. Winterdale, who had not spoken to him before. Mr. Sharp started at the abruptness of the question, and seemed at a loss for a reply. After a little hesitation, he said, Why, Sir, I should be frightened at it.

What is there frightful in it? demanded Mr. Winterdale.

Indeed, Sir, I don't know, answered Mr. Sharp; but I always understood there was something very terrible in going to law.

I never found it, said Mr. Winterdale; and I have been at law many times. For my own part, I think there is something very pleasant in obtaining one's rights, and trouncing those who invade them.

Very pleasant, indeed, said Mr. Sharp; only I suppose it takes a good deal of time and money to do it.

I suppose you waste your time and money at cards: if you do not, many people do, and never think about either, said Mr. Winterdale.

I do play at cards sometimes, to be sure, rejoined Mr. Sharp; but, if I may go to take the liberty to say so, one knows what one stakes; and that's more than he does that goes to law.

And more than the gamester does, said Mr. Winterdale. Does not good fortune tempt him, and ill fortune goad him to his ruin? Law can do no more.

Very true, Sir, said Mr. Sharp; but there is some *amoosment* in cards.

I find an amusement, said Mr. Winterdale, in punishing a rascal who injures, or endeavours to cheat me though, continued he, looking steadfastly at Mrs. Thacker, one does not always succeed as one ought.

This was a challenge which the lady had prudence enough to decline. Had she made a spirited reply to it, I should have expected to have seen her handed out of the room, with some earnestness.

However, continued Mr. Winterdale, finding it did not take effect, there can be no doubt, but I shall make your scoundrel repent, Charlotte, and you have only to wait till then, to be more amiable than Miss Mowbray.

Mr. Winterdale does not know that Montgomery is the son of my adversary. Having drank his usual quantity of wine, he rose from table without ceremony. We went into the drawingroom at the same time, where Henry and Mr. Sharp soon joined us; but we saw no more of Mr. Winterdale till our visitors were gone.

At supper Mr. Winterdale was silent. When it was over, addressing himself to my mother, he said, Lady Winterdale, I want to have a little conversation with you; and, if possible, let us argue the matter coolly.

Now you have once brought yourself to be cool, my dear Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, I have hopes of you. You may depend upon my coolness, I assure you. And now, drawing her chair close to his, and laying her hand on his arm, Now let us begin.

Did not you give up the company of the Thackers while I was at the Lodge?

Nay, we are going over the same ground again. Give me leave to answer your question, by another. Will you do me the favour to break your leg?

Is a man entitled to no consideration; no respect, no indulgence, if he have not a broken leg?

I must reply to you now; or our catechism will be all questions, and no answers. A man is entitled to some consideration, respect, and so forth, if his legs are whole; but not of the same kind, or in the same degree, as if one of them should be broken. The fractured leg, being an alarming circumstance, and, further, being only a temporary one, may demand the sacrifice of a woman's time and amusements; but, when two friends, married or otherwise (for married folks should still, be friends), can each stand upon their own legs, I think they have a right to run away from each other sometimes, and that it is better for them to do so.

Such being your opinion, why did you not declare it to me at the Lodge, that I might have known whether our sentiments agreed, before it was too late? But you knew they did not agree: you knew you were imposing upon me: you knew I was determined against all company. I had reason to believe, from the life you led, and the fine stories you told, that you liked it as little as myself. Now you do not blush to own, not only that you like company, but that you will have it.

Stop, Mr. Winterdale. If you make your speech much longer, I shall never remember the whole of it. You say first, that I should have acquainted you with all my inclinations and propensities, that, in case there should have been any one among them you did not approve, you might have escaped the misfortune of marrying me. Now I have as happy a talent at asking questions as yourself; and I might enquire whether you made a candid confession to me of all that I may hereafter deem amiss in you. But I need not. I will only ask, was there ever yet a woman who loved, and, consequently wished to please the man she loved, that did not involuntarily shew him that side of her character which she thought would please him most?

So far women may be right; for if he saw both sides, no man in his senses would ever marry.

With regard to company, I prefer your's to all the world: next to your's, I prefer my Charlotte's, my Eleanor's, and my Henry's; but one cannot always surfeit upon sweets. One must have something one likes less, to ascertain the value of what one prizes most.

Then the worse, the better for your purpose, I suppose; and you are lucky in meeting with that brazen−faced, ignorant fishwoman, Madam Thacker, and that linsey woolsey, paper−skulled, puppy, Sharp. You should have brought the scoundrel parson; as being the vilest of God's works upon earth. But, perhaps, you could not get him.

I have no need of such people as the Thacker family to remind me of your superior advantages. I am very sorry they are so little interesting. I wish they were agreeable people, and that there were more such; they would never, in my opinion, come into competition with you. But one cannot make ones neighbours and acquaintances: one is obliged to take them as one finds them.

Audacious, unfeeling woman! argument is vain: I therefore tell you plainly I will be master of my own house, and I will neither have Montgomeries, Thackers or any other visitors in it.

Your openness calls forth mine. I do not dispute your consequence in your own house; but I chuse to be mistress of my own conduct. At present I have only claimed the common privileges of going to church, and enjoying the company of my relation, and my neighbours. It will be well if I stop there.

You will not stop there. This is your first essay. You have married for a home; for a convenience. The affection you shewed was a mere pretence; a bait, to catch me. Now your arts have succeeded, you drop the mask; you shew yourself in your proper colours, which were carefully hidden before.

Mr. Winterdale, you forget that you promised to be cool. I am as determined as yourself; though not so irritable; and I think I am more reasonable; as I only wish to regulate my own conduct, while you wish to regulate your's and mine. If I out−step the bounds of decency and propriety, you have a right to interfere: while I keep within them, let me go where I like, and receive whom I like. No rational being should be entirely dependent on another; though the one should happen to be a woman, and the other a man; or though the two should happen to be man and wife.

Then, in spite of the authority, the inclination, and the absolute commands of your husband, you are determined to associate with the Thackers, and all the other miscreants you can find?

I am determined to associate with the Thackers, and all other people of character and condition whom I may chuse. If my acquaintance are not of that description, interpose with your authority; it will then be displayed in its proper place: if they are, my inclination ought to take place of your's, on such a subject. And as to commands I told you before I did not like the word. I would not make use of it, even to a servant.

If then I am to meet with no redress from you, whence it ought to proceed, I must have recourse to others, by whom I shall be minded, I will give positive orders to my servants to admit nobody.

Your servants cannot always guard the citadel: mine will sometimes be upon duty; and all will find their account in serving their mistress.

I will discharge every servant within the walls that dares to disobey me.

And get others in their places who will do the same Come, come, Mr. Winterdale, you had better not resort to such violent measures; and, when you are *perfectly* cool, I am persuaded you will not. You are so fortunate as to have excellent servants do not change them for worse. You are a good master, or they would not have remained so long with you do not incur the disgrace and inconvenience of becoming a bad one. Besides, in that case, you make the world judge between us, which will be sure to determine in my favour. It is wisest to agree upon these little matters between ourselves, without allowing that officious meddler called the world, to have any share in them. And, last of all, though first in consequence do not put me upon seeking to counteract you; upon rambling from home, in search of society; upon trying how far I can go in opposition to you; but rather let me find a pleasure in your company, among the rest, and greater than the rest.

And now, my dear Mr. Winterdale, continued my mother, holding out her hand, as we have spoken our minds to each other, with the sincerity of real friends, let us be friends in good earnest; and do not divert me from my purpose of making you a most excellent wife.

Mr. Winterdale took her hand, though with some reluctance, saying, Good God! what inexplicable creatures women are! To please us, they assume a shape which is not their own; we embrace the phantom, and think it perfect. It changes, in our arms, to an opposite form, and they have the art to make us almost think that perfect too! I thought I had known something of you, added he. I had a wife once, who would have burst into tears, and given up every wish of her heart, before I had said half so much to her as I have said to you.

A sigh stole from Henry's bosom, which Eleanor and I each greeted with a sigh, in return.

Harriet, what do you think of my mother's logic? I confess it has bewildered me, as well as poor Mr. Winterdale. It reminds me of the eloquence of one of the great personages in Milton, which

Could make the worse appear the better cause.

I am sure that, in my heart, I think her wrong, and yet her arguments appear to be right. I think her husband wrong too; so, between both, I know not what to make of it. That they may jumble and clash, till each becomes nearer right, according to the notion of Mr. Henry Winterdale, is the wish of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 30. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, June 27, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

No further cloud has arisen, to shade the lustre of Mr. Winterdale's and my mother's honey moon. She is gentle, kind, and attentive; and he is not very ungentle, unkind, or repulsive; which is saying much for him.

My mother has returned the visit of Mrs. Thacker: but it seemed the tacit agreement of both parties that no notice should be taken of it. She neither said where she was going, where she had been, or related any circumstance that occurred at the vicarage: and he made no enquiries. That he was not pleased, his looks avowed; but he has found contradiction unavailing.

We had the satisfaction of leaving Mr. Winterdale in good company; that of his privy counsellor, Mr. Foreclose, a mean, cringing, prating attorney; and their subject of conversation was most interesting; the merits of Sir James's claim to the Montgomery estate. We left them, seated at a table, covered with papers; discussing the validity of reversions and remainders; and we found them there on our return, with remainders enough for another hour, and reversions for another time.

By the way, this Mr. Foreclose has a pretty place of it at Winterdale Hall. If I may judge from his appearance and abilities, his frequent visits will not much interfere with his other practice; and he seems to be invested with the privilege of selling as many of his idle hours as he pleases to Mr. Winterdale; of breakfasting and dining here, whenever it suits his convenience, and placing it to account. I believe he evinces his gratitude to his employer, in the same manner that is practised by gypsies, and other foretellers of events; he seldom shocks his ear by unwelcome prognostications. I have a notion that all Mr. Winterdale's causes, whether offensive or defensive, are incontrovertibly right; and if the right be not proved by the decision, the judges and juries are unquestionably wrong. Thus the ingenious Mr. Foreclose pays for the mutton he eats today, and secures mutton for to−morrow.

I have made another discovery. Mr. Winterdale, with all his fancied independence, and boasted dominations is not only the dupe of this crooked limb of the law, but he is under the management of his own servant. I always considered there was something unaccountable in a man of his parsimonious and domineering temper, being a good master. Upon a nearer view, my dear, I have discovered that he is not a good master; that he is suspicious and overbearing. How, then, say you, can the superior Mendall, the honest Stable, and the artless Ralph, have lived with him so long? I have found that out also, and I will tell you.

Mendall is completely his master. He has the good sense to let Mr. Winterdale vapour, and bluster, and retain the belief of his own authority; but his opinions, given in the form of advice, and with the respectful air of a servant, generally prevail. You will say this remains to be accounted for. It is done in a word. Mendall is a truly valuable man, and has made himse4f so necessary to his master, that be consents to any thing, rather than harbour an idea

of parting with him.

This is natural enough in a man so destitute of other attachments as Mr. Winterdale; but the singularity is that Mendall does not abuse his master's favour, by making it subservient to his own interests and passions; but employs his influence for the good of the rest.

Long acquaintance and confidence have proved to Mr. Winterdale that his servant is incorruptible; he, therefore, is satisfied with his conduct, and, knowing that he would not suffer the others to betray him, he is satisfied with their conduct, while under his inspection. With regard to the other servants, they have only to obey the authority of their master, as it is delegated to Mendall; and it is exercised in so reasonable a manner, that they cannot but be pleased with their duty.

I dwell with some pleasure on this subject, because I have seen favourite servants, *drest in a little brief authority,* servile to the master or mistress from whom they derived it, and tyrannical and capricious to those who were unfortunately placed under it. Mendall is the reverse. Though he is respectful to his master, he does not spare him; and, though he will not countenance the faults of his fellow−servants, he is indulgent to their trivial errors. The master regards him as a shield against their plunder; and the servants as a bulwark against his oppression,

My dear Harriet, what shall I do with Montgomery? I cannot manage these men as my mother does Alas! *because I love*! He looks uneasy, melancholy. He has dined with us once, and Mr. Winterdale's behaviour to him, though not cordial, was not rude, which was all that could be expected from him. I believe he thinks ill of my mother. He does not treat her with that unaffected kindness and respect, that flowed from his heart, unknown to himself, before my unreserved confessions. She, herself, perceives it, and has asked me the cause, which I did not choose to explain. But if his farther knowledge of her has lowered her in his esteem, that does not extend to me. On the contrary, he told me her share of the fault lessened mine; and his looks still confess his tenderness; though it is mingled with a melancholy for which I cannot account.

Is he afraid of Henry Winterdale? I have some suspicions that Mr. Winterdale has his eye upon the Montgomery estate for his son, when it shall be awarded to me, of which event he does not entertain a doubt. He unbends himself more to me than even to my mother, and speaks to me in a tone that borders on affection. I have not the vanity to imagine that any other merit of mine than what is attached to my woods, and arable and pasture lands, could move the heart of Mr. Winterdale in my favour. If Montgomery has observed this kindness, and it is probable it might not escape the keen eye of a lover, he may have some cause to fear.

With regard to Henry, I know not whether even the keen eye of a lover could penetrate into his heart. Love seems the spring of his behaviour both to me and Eleanor; but to love us both must be reserved for Mr. Sharp alone.

There are moments, however, when he is off his guard; and in these, his attachment to Eleanor is clear to me, though she will not allow it.

My own behaviour is such as would counteract the idea of Henry being his rival, in the breast of Montgomery, open and frank to both. I have concealed nothing from the latter; and I hope my countenance shews I have nothing to conceal. Not so Montgomery. He looks sad; I ask him the cause, and he is silent.

This love is a delightful sensation, Harriet, but, in one way or other, I believe the men always make us pay for it. Nothing is so high a price, as to suffer for their inconstancy. May I never be called on to pay this; for ill, very ill, should I bear it. Want of confidence is not a trifle; especially to me, who abhor every kind of reserve, as being the first step towards dissimulation. I will consider it as a trial of my patience; a virtue that, if I marry, I suppose I shall find sufficient cause to excercise.

I will not, at present, put your's to any farther proof, but assure you that I am

Your ever affectionate,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 31. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, July 4, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

The melancholy of Montgomery continues; but the cause is no longer a secret. He has informed his father, by letter, of his accidental acquaintance with my mother and myself, and his consequent attachment to me. It needed not the eloquence of a lover, to paint the advantages which would result from the union of two contending branches of the same family. The certainty of the title and estate not being divided, and the delivering the latter from the gripe of the law, are circumstances not to be overlooked by Sir James, the woman out of the question.

But, my friend I am not out of the question. I have turned the scale against myself. The indiscretion of your Charlotte has sunk her so low, that her chance of the Montgomery estate cannot raise her to the level of the present claimant.

As I sat this morning at one of the windows of our drawing room, I saw my mother and, Eleanor walking in the park, attended by Montgomery. He looked up, and bowed, and I hastened to join them. We had not walked far before my mother complained of fatigue, and sat down under a tree. Eleanor seated herself by her, while Montgomery and I pursued our walk, on my mother saying we should find her there, on our return.

Montgomery, said I, when we were out of hearing, you assure me of your regard, and I cannot doubt your sincerity; but you think me unworthy of your confidence. Something preys upon your mind, of which you will not allow me a share. It is unkind to put me upon making professions, either of secrecy, or the interest I take in your concerns.

My Charlotte, replied he, I have not words to express my opinion of your worth, or my gratitude for the hopes you have given me; but these serve only to render my situation the more painful.

Good God! cried I, what can be the matter? Tell me, instantly; for I will not be trifled with.

I have acquainted my father with my meeting Lady Montgomery and yourself at the assembly; of my being allowed to visit you; of my unalterable affection for you; and I have not been silent on the excellencies of your character, and the advantages of such a connexion. He stopped.

Go on, said I.

I cannot.

Then I will tell the rest. Sir James has heard of my misconduct; and the estate in litigation will not bribe him to accept of me as his daughter.

Still Montgomery was silent, and I proceeded.

By the accusations of my own heart, I might judge of those I should meet with from a stranger. You, yourself, have not acquitted, you have only pardoned me. Sir James, whom partiality does not bias towards mercy, abides

by the decision of justice, which condemns me. I always felt a repugnance to the steps that it appeared to me necessity compelled me to take; but I never saw them in their true light, till the means to retrieve them were contested; and I never felt their force, till I hesitated He put my arm in his, and fixing his eyes eagerly upon mine. Till when, he cried?

Till I feared they would degrade me in your estimation, said I, lowering my eyes, that they might not encounter his.

To know you is to love you; and the more to know, the more to love you, said Montgomery. Never did you appear so amiable in my sight as at this moment. Were my father here, he would solicit you in my behalf with as much sincerity as I would myself.

I can acknowledge my errors to your father, said I; but I cannot sue to him. It would be meanness.

Forbid it Heaven! said Montgomery. Knowing you as I do, he would sue to you; but, knowing you from the only blameable action of your life, and that much exaggerated, he has conceived a prejudice against you that, perhaps, none but yourself can remove. There is a way, continued he but I dare not propose it.

Speak freely, said I, and I will deny you as freely, if I cannot approve it.

Could you condescend to be mine without his knowledge?

Never, replied I; unless I brought the Montgomery estate in my hand.

In waiting to know which of us must bestow it, rejoined Montgomery, our best years may be flown. My father and Mr. Winterdale are equally positive on opposite sides. My only pleasure would be to share it with you, to whomsoever it may belong. Had we no prejudice to contend with, the way would be open before us; but we have my father's firm persuasion of his right, and the impression of a story, the joint fabrication of truth and malice, or, what is just as mischievous, truth and common report, against us. That I shall make every effort to counteract this, in my father's breast, is certain; but all I can urge, truth itself, will be placed to the account of hood−winked love. Were you mine, were I once allowed to introduce you to him, every ill impression would vanish before your virtues and your graces, like the vapour of the night before the morning sun.

Ah! Montgomery, said I, I behold the hood−winked lover now! My pride, however, forbids the trial. Were I your inferior, I will not say that I might not be prevailed upon by mutual love to enter clandestinely into your family; for I am not certain how far the controul of a parent reaches in matters on which the happiness of the child depends but, of your own blood; undoubted heiress of a splendid fortune, till your father stepped forward to dispute it; and, let the dispute terminate as it may, the natural, and, therefore, rightful, inheritrix of the patrimony of my father, I will not become the wife of Sir James's son, without his consent.

Dear Charlotte, said Montgomery, If pride can be just, your's is so; but consider what you sacrifice to it. The felicity of my future days depends upon my passing them with you why abridge it, by subtracting from their number? why not permit me to promote your happiness, by every unremitting effort of my life? Why not give me an opportunity to convince my father of the false estimate he has made of your character? and, why not rescue the estate which must be the property of one, or both of us, from the iron fangs of the law.

You perplex, but you do not convince me, answered I. At present I could not agree to your proposal without a journey into the north, which nothing should prevail upon me to undertake. Employ the interval between now, and the time when the law will allow me to be at my own disposal, in endeavouring to soften your father; not by justifying, or palliating my former conduct; but by representing to him my detestation and repentance of it. During this period let the retainers of the law reap their harvest. At the end of it, as we shall neither of us be responsible,

for our actions to any one; if you dare take me, with my debts on one side, and my chance of being able to pay them on the other; here is my hand, said I, presenting it to him, with a smile I may be your's but, mind, I do not promise. He took my hand with rapture.

Not only *may*, but *must*, my Charlotte. This hand, that smile, conveyed your promise, and the world contains nothing that could tempt me to relinquish it.

Now, said I, looking back, and seeing my mother and Eleanor still seated. Now, let us rejoin Lady Winterdale.

One moment, said Montgomery, and I have done. My profession will soon oblige me to quit this part of the country; to leave you an inhabitant of the same house with a man who has every advantage of mind and person to recommend him. May I be at ease on this subject?

You may, replied I. There is a great affection between Henry Winterdale and myself; but it is not of the kind to give you pain.

Will you allow me to speak without reserve?

I not only allow, but desire it.

Mr. Winterdale's is a heart so little susceptible of friendship that I think even you, lovely and amiable as you are, could not have made an impression on it; yet there is a comparative softness in his manner, when he addresses you. I can no otherwise account for this than by his designing you for his son.

I have been struck with the same idea, replied I; but no other foundation than yourself. It is certain, however, if there be any truth in it, that the charms of my father's estate have subdued his heart.

They would have their weight on such a heart as Mr. Winterdale's, undoubtedly, but, whatever may be his inducement, I have every thing to fear that can be accomplished by his influence.

Montgomery, said I, surely you forget yourself. What is the influence of Mr. Winterdale over me?

Pardon my weakness, said he. Where I have so much at stake, I may not see things through their proper medium. How can I forsee what may be effected by opportunity and perseverance? I leave you exposed to every effort he can make in favour of his son, without knowing what those efforts may be; but, more than this, I leave you in the company of his son. If I can judge impartially, there is but one circumstance that can possibly prevent his becoming my rival, if he be not such, already. No man, my Charlotte, that has a heart, can be domesticated with you, but must love you; unless that heart were given to another. My only hope is in Eleanor. I have scrutinized his behaviour to you both, but I cannot determine to which he gives the preference.

If you were not so serious I should laugh at you, said I. Are all men to love me, who do not love my cousin? Your medium is, indeed, a false one; but, as it embellishes, as well as magnifies objects, I would have you continue to see me through it as long as you live. On these subjects women are endowed with a sort of instinctive faculty that outstrips the reason and acute observation of you men. You have exercised these in vain, to discover whether Henry Winterdale love Eleanor or me. My prescience can assure you that he loves her; though he has not yet told it, even to herself.

And now, continued I, having set your mind at rest, I will, as we walk back, mention to you a circumstance, on which mine is not so.

I do not like the profession of a soldier. I acknowledge your red coat and gold epaulets had a very powerful effect upon me at a country assembly, and it was no small matter of exultation that I danced with them; but if ever I should be induced to think of passing my life with you, I should see them in a different light. I am a flaming patriot, and burn most furiously with the love of my country; but you will pardon me if I confess that I should love my husband better, and should be loth to part with him, when my country called.

My profession is not my own choice, said Montgomery. My father proposed it merely as a resource to a man whose fortune was yet undetermined, and who knew not how to live according to his rank; besides, if my inclination pointed to it, which it does not, I embraced it too late in life. At five and twenty one has not time to make one's way in it; and one's mind does not easily adopt the necessary system of subordination that runs through the army; a system which approaches nearer to tyranny on one hand, and servility on the other, than suits my disposition. The age of my being gratified with a red coat is past; but I might render myself useful to my country in a way that would not divide me from my Charlotte. I might cultivate some of its lands, if that agreed with her notions of patriotism.

The very thing I wished ! cried I. Agriculture is the noblest of all employments, as well as the most favourable to the morals. Let the soldier talk of honour and glory I see more honour in covering the earth with grain and verdure, than with dead and mangled bodies; and more glory in providing for the subsistence of our fellow creatures, than in destroying them.

By this time we joined my mother and Eleanor, and returned home.

Your's, very sincerely,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 32. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, July 11, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

The storm has at last burst over the head of my mother. I have been in daily expectation, since her marriage, of applications being made to Mr. Winterdale, for the payment of her debts; but the first happened only three days ago; when he entered the room, with an open letter in his hand, containing a bill due from Lady Montgomery to a linendraper in London, of 250l, and requesting payment. His lips quivered; and his face was pale, with anger.

Do you know any thing of this? demanded he, presenting the letter to her.

My mother, after looking it slightly over, answered, I believe I do.

Do you owe the money, said Mr. Winterdale?

I suppose so, replied my mother. I never kept any account against these sort of people; but I dare say it is right.

I cannot now stain my paper with the language of Mr. Winterdale. Suffice it to say that he repeated, and exhausted, every oath and imprecation; every opprobious epithet; and every term of abuse, that his imagination could furnish. Eleanor and I were frightened, and rose to retire. He would not suffer us to leave the room; but obliged us to be seated; saying he would have us witnesses of the shame and dishonesty of our mother and aunt.

Poor Eleanor burst into tears, and I could scarcely refrain.

Crocodiles as you are, said Mr. Winterdale, weep on; your tears are only to betray!

My mother sat, during the whole time, with a countenance undisturbed. She was silent and grave; but her looks expressed neither fear or anger. When Mr. Winterdale's passion could no longer burn without fresh fuel, he stopped, and said, abruptly, to my mother,

Have you nothing to say?

You say so much, replied she, that you give me no opportunity.

Begin then, said he, with a curse, and try if you can cheat me again.

I have no such intention, said my mother. I am heartily sorry to displease you. I can only say I wanted the things, and could not do without them; and I wish, with all my heart, I had been able to pay for them, myself; but, as I was not, that trouble must fall upon you.

Have you the impudence to tell me this to my face, asked Mr. Winterdale?

I do not know how to express myself more modestly, replied his lady. I might, indeed, have requested it as a favour; but, I suppose, you would have objected even to that.

Does the man live, or did he ever live, who, marrying an amiable, economical, solitary widow, found out that she had been extravagant; that she was in debt; that she had cheated him; that she had made his fortune answerable for sins committed before she knew him; and that justified these proceedings by saying, As I could not pay my debts, you must pay them for me; did you ever know such a man make no objection to the conduct of his wife? Did he not rather abhor her, as an infamous woman, and dread her, lest she should prove his ruin?

I think, said my mother, if your language were set against my actions, we should neither of us be much indebted to the other.

I deny it, said Mr. Winterdale. Words are but empty breath. Ten thousand of the worst of them would not equal the smallest of your actions, You have injured me deeply and substantially: my words hurt you not. You ought to be made to feel, by other means.

You would not beat me, would you, demanded his lady?

My situation in life prevents me, answered Mr. Winterdale; but if I were a cobbler, I would not leave a white place upon your delicate skin.

Well, said my mother, cheap as words are, I think you have had two hundred and fifty pound's worth for your money. If you always meet with so good a bargain, you may be satisfied.

I expect, said her husband, I have more such bargains before me, if I do not fortunately run mad, and escape the knowledge of them. Is this the only sum you owe?

I am afraid it is not, replied my mother.

I was afraid so too, said Mr. Winterdale. Pray what may the whole of your Ladyship's debts amount to?

I cannot make the least conjecture, answered my mother. As I have already told you, I never kept any account of them.

More shame for you, said Mr. Winterdale! You ought to have kept an account of them; both to have prevented imposition in your creditors, and to have restricted yourself within the limits of your own fortune.

It would have been well if I had, said my mother.

It would have been well for me if I had never known you, rejoined her husband; but, since, to my sorrow, I do tell me, are there many of these debts?

There are more than I could wish, replied my mother. I began to find the people very troublesome.

Now, said Mr. Winterdale, the name of Mereval is explained. I always thought it a piece of unnecessary prudence, to assume a feigned name, in order to avoid impertinent visitors; but it seems you had a motive more than I could divine; you were afraid your visitors should bring writs in their pockets. And I, fool that I was, trusting to a pretty set of features, and a pretence of discretion and affection, together with your being the widow of a man of rank and fortune, blindly fell into your snare!

Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, I spread no snares abroad to catch you. You found me in my own house.

Every way to my misfortune, I did, replied he! Would to God I had left you there! In mischief did our acquaintance begin, and mischief will mark the whole course of it!

Neither did I entrap you with any falsehood, said my mother. I only did not confess all the truth. I loved you, and, therefore, I did not own what might have occasioned me to lose you.

Most surely you would have lost me: or, rather, saved me, said Mr. Winterdale. But love was not your motive. Little as I know of love, I will pronounce it. Had you really loved me, you would rather have thrown yourself upon my generosity, by an open confession of your circumstances, than have forfeited my esteem for ever, by your concealment of them.

I foresaw the event of that. Have you not this moment said, that an appeal to your generosity would have been vain? Did you not own that I should have lost you, if I had told the whole truth?

I did: and more honourable it had been for you to have done so, than to have fastened yourself upon me, that I might bear the weight of your debts; instead of yourself.

But my arts, if such they were, were open to detection. Why did not Mr. Winterdale, learned in the law, and, therefore, not ignorant that if he married a woman he took her debts along with her; why did not he enquire, why did not he endeavour to ascertain, whether his intended wife was free from debts?

The reason is plain, said Mr. Winterdale. I was such a gull, such a gudgeon, that it never once entered my head you could be a shark. But, if I had doubted, to whom could I have applied for information? Could I have asked your own agent if Lady Montgomery were an impostor? or could I have called at every shop in Bond−street, and asked its master if Lady Montgomery owed him money? Dishonourable as your conduct has been, your behaviour, on its being brought to light, is, to as great a degree, shameless.

I do not defend my conduct. I am sorry to say it is indefensible. But, call it by one of the harshest names you can find; say I have over−reached you. Did you not intend to over−reach me?

I never deceived you in the smallest particular.

Perhaps not, I do not accuse you of it: nor can you accuse me of downright fibbing. But did not you think you had an excellent bargain? Did not you secretly glory in being the gainer by an union, in which I, of course, must be the loser?

I did expect to gain an affectionate and a respectable companion, who would also be some advantage in a pecuniary point of view; but I used no underhand means to obtain her.

You kept the pecuniary part of the matter to yourself, as well as I; and, had my situation been just what it appeared, you would have had great cause to congratulate yourself on your policy. I mean no personal reflections; but, at my age; with my disposition, and the few attractions I still possess, I should never have thought of burying myself in the country, if I had been free from the debts which cause you this disturbance.

Grant me patience, Heaven! cried Mr. Winterdale, while I hear this audacious woman acknowledge that she would not have married me, had she been worth having!

Pardon me. I do not exactly acknowledge that. I only mean to say that if you expected youth, that is, comparative youth, beauty, rank, and fortune, it was more than your share; and you ought not to repine at being disappointed of something. The whole amounts to this. You endeavoured to form an alliance, in which every circumstance should be in your own favour, and you believed you had done so ; but it turns out that there is one against you.

Lady Winterdale, the woman is more against me than the money she owes. You have the cunning, as well as wickedness, of Belzebub himself. I can give the whole amount, as well as you; and in three words. You cheat me; out−face me; and then upbraid me for not discovering your deceit. And was it for this, continued Mr. Winterdale, striking his forehead, was it for this that I have spent my days in the accumulation of riches! Have I been blessed with a dutiful son, and a trusty servant; the one making no claims upon my fortune, and the other assisting me to save it, to have it squandered by an unthinking, unfeeling woman, before I knew that she existed! Have I watched with unremitting care to preserve pounds: and rushed blindfold into an abyss, in which I have sunk thousands!

Henry, said he to his son, who now entered the room, This cockatrice, whom I have the misfortune to call my wife, owes money to every man that would trust her, and has married me to pay her debts.

I hope not, Sir, said Henry, with astonishment and dismay.

It is too true that I am in debt, Henry, said my mother.

Yes, said Mr. Winterdale; its truth is not to be doubted. But she shall not have the pleasure of spending all my fortune. If it must go, I will bestow a part of it on those who deserve it. Some good shall come out of evil. Henry, I double your allowance, from this day. I may do more; but I do not know yet what I can do.

Henry gratefully thanked his father, and said he should not take advantage of a moment when he was heated by unexpected demands; but would wait till he had time to reflect, before he accepted his offer.

I will have no hesitation, said Mr. Winterdale. Take me, while I am in the humour: and now ring the bell.

Mendall came into the room.

Mendall; said his master, I have always been sensible of your merit. You cannot say that I have not. But I have not rewarded it properly. I shall increase your salary twenty pounds a year; and tell Stable she shall have ten,

and Ralph he shall have five, more than they have.

Mendall was dumb, with astonishment.

You may well stare, continued Mr. Winterdale. I have hitherto known only the pleasure of saving money: I begin to think there is a pleasure in spending it: a lesson I have been taught by your lady, here. Her Ladyship has been spending my money, before it was her's; and I am resolved to take a little of it out of her clutches.

I am very much obliged to you, Sir, for your bounty, said Mendall, though I am sorry for the occasion. I did hear my lady owed some money, before I left town.

Would to God I had heard it before I left town, said Mr. Winterdale. Why did not you tell me of it, Mendall?

I did not know it till after the wedding, Sir, replied Mendall; and then I thought you would hear of it too soon, without me.

Then had you known of it before, Mendall, said my mother, I am afraid I should have had but a small chance of becoming your mistress.

I am afraid your Ladyship would, said Mendall.

Your master is more indebted to your honesty than I am to your good will, said my mother.

I should be very sorry to offend your Ladyship, said Mendall; but I hope your Ladyship cannot be offended, when you consider that honesty is all a servant has to trust to, and that he owes it first to his Master.

Ah! Mendall! said Mr. Winterdale, if your Lady had been as upright as you, we might have been a happy family.

But, Mendall, said my mother, if I had been as upright as you are, you would not have had your salary raised, you know; so, as your master has just said, good comes out of evil.

The evil causes by which good is produced are not the less wicked on account of their unforeseen effects, said Mr. Winterdale; and in this case, as in most others, they could not have produced such effects, without another cause. Had my son and my servants been undeserving, your being so would not have operated in their favour.

Mendall then left the room, and his master followed; no doubt, to deposit his sorrows and vexations in the bosom of his trusty squire.

Thus, my dear Harriet, has my mother swam and paddled through this *Sea of troubles*. I should have sunk into it, and been drowned.

I will not make use of Mr. Winterdale's vulgar term impudence; but, certainly, my mother has a wonderful equanimity of temper! In a right cause, it would be a virtue; in this, I am afraid it approaches nearer Mr. Winterdale's ideas of it than I could wish. I, sometimes, feel a little ashamed of being her daughter. If that is a wrong expression, chide and forgive

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 33. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, July 18, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

Since I wrote last Mr. Winterdale has had several attacks upon his purse and his patience. Sometimes he grinds his teeth, and is silent; at others he flies out, as before. Every sentiment of love and esteem is fled; but, I suppose, my mother never built her prospects of happiness upon these. Harriet, what can be called happiness without them?

The greatest enjoyment this world affords appears to me the love of the man with whom I am to spend my life! to whom I am indissolubly bound! at least the bond is so strong, that nothing but the greatest violence can dissolve it. Shall I sit down to breakfast, to dinner, to supper, every day, with a man who may hate, or despise me, or, to whom I may be indifferent! Shall this man have a right to enter my apartment any hour of the day; and shall I not have the power even to exclude him at night! Avert it, heaven! for I could not exist under it.

Next to this enjoyment, are the love and respect of those around one; one's family, one's friends, one's neighbours, one's servants. Great blessings! though inferior to the first.

My mother has forfeited all. How she can look her husband in the face is, to me, amazing. Filial love and duty scarcely, keep me within the bounds I ought to observe towards my mother. What must Henry, the noble Henry, who, in all the fire of youth, has walked in the narrow path prescribed for him by his father, without verging towards the right or the left, without making one crooked step, what must he think of her?

What must Mendall think? who, placed between a suspicious tyrant on one hand; and people whose dependent situation leads them to be petty invaders of his rights, on the other; has kept each in his place, and given satisfaction to all. What must the other servants think? who have never betrayed their master; whether from their own integrity, or that of their superintendent.

And, lastly, what must the Thackers think? How must they triumph in the misfortune of their adversary! The pecuniary losses of the avaricious Mr. Winterdale, and the forced submission of the absolute Mr. Winterdale, will be the highest gratification to them.

On one of the occasions on which Mr. Winterdale indulged himself in invective, he concluded by addressing himself to his son.

Henry, said he, you see what vipers women are. Let my fate be a warning to you. Trust none of them. I would sooner leave my estate to build hospitals than marry the best. I should not wonder if even Charlotte, here, innocent as she looks, were in debt!

Indeed Sir, said I, with shame and sorrow I confess it; I am still more in debt than my mother.

Both father and son started; and their involuntary motion seemed to be to run away from the vipers. Mr. Winterdale was the first to recover the use of his speech.

I could not have believed it exclaimed he, though I said it! An unmarried woman! A minor! Pray, my dear, how could you contrive to get into debt? You can owe for nothing but a few feathers and frills; and, considering the handsome allowance your guardians have made you, I do not very well see how that could happen.

Sir, said I, I have contracted debts in a manner, and to an extent, of which you have no conception. I stand engaged for sums expended in our house and amusements. We lived beyond our income; our creditors could no longer be pacified; and I borrowed money on very disadvantageous terms, to pay them.

My dear, said Mr. Winterdale, you judge very wisely, that I could have no conception of this; but you should not have owned it, till you had found out some fool to marry you.

I agreed with my mother, replied I, in living in a style we could not support, and ought never to have fallen into; but I differed from her in opinion, with regard to confessing its consequences before marriage.

Yes, said my mother, I must do Miss Montgomery the justice to own that she wanted me to arrange all my faults and misdemeanors in proper order, and place them before you; and then, ask if you would do me the favour to marry me, with my sins upon my head. Nay, I was once afraid she would have taken that trouble upon herself.

That step alone would have washed out all her transgressions, said Mr. Winterdale. So then, my pretty one, continued he, addressing himself to me, you had occasion for the name of Mereval too?

No, Sir, replied I, a moment's reflection will convince you that I am safe till I come of age.

But if you should lose your cause, no name, except that of a husband, can keep you out of a gaol, after you are of age.

I thank you, Sir, for your assurances that I shall not lose my cause; but, whether I do, or not, no man shall ever become responsible for my debts, without first knowing what they are.

Then I fancy that pretty white hand of your's will lead apes in the other world, said Mr. Winterdale.

I felt hurt at his sarcasms; hurt, almost to tears; but I restrained them, and made no reply. What emotions were depicted in my face, I know not; but I turned my eyes on Henry, and observed in his, pity, mingled with horror.

Eleanor and I then retired to our drawing−room, and I sent to request the favour of Henry's company, for a few moments. I held out my hand to him, as he entered, and, turning my face another way, I burst into tears. He took my hand, and kissed it.

Henry, said I, dare you trust yourself with vipers?

My dear Charlotte, said he; though I cannot help blaming your conduct, I pity your distress.

You cannot blame me more than I do myself, said I. There needed not Mr. Winterdale's sarcastic reflections to inform me I had done wrong. To him I will offer no reply. Let him judge me as he may think I deserve. To you I will only say that, the mischief done, it appeared incumbent on me to repair it; by paying debts which, though contracted in my mother's name, were for our mutual service; and with money to which I had then an undoubted right, and which the law would shortly place at my disposal.

You did not see, said Henry, that such reasoning might have led to your utter ruin.

I did not, replied I; nor could it have involved me in ruin, if my father's estate had remained undisputed.

Not what you had already done, said Henry; but the track you were in pointed directly to it.

I am aware of that, said I; and I look upon the claims of Sir James Montgomery as the means, in the hands of providence, to snatch me from such a desperate course. My own resolution *might* have saved me, for I did not take such measures without great reluctance; but I dare not say that it *would.* There are two circumstances which, unhappily for me, aggravate a conduct that, without them, would admit of no defence. The first is, that my mother and myself being both culpable, each fault casts a dark shade on the other, and doubles the disgrace of both: after her errors have been weighed, mine are thrown into the scale, and down we go together. The other is the unworthy trick that has been practised upon Mr. Winterdale. In this, I solemnly assure you, and Eleanor knows I speak the truth, that I had no share.

I should be ashamed, said Eleanor, that any declaration of mine could be thought necessary to confirm whatever you said.

And I should despise myself, said Henry,' if I did not give implicit belief to whatever either of you said.

I not only had no share in the deceit that has been practised upon Mr. Winterdale, said I; but I endeavoured to prevent it, by intreaties, arguments, and tears. I even hesitated, as my mother has hinted, whether I should not inform him or you of her circumstances; but, upon reflection, I concluded that I had no right to betray my mother. There were times, however, in which I hoped Mr. Winterdale's circumspection might preserve him from the pit that was dug under his feet; and, at one of those times a hasty expression escaped me to that effect, which you combated, without knowing the just reason I had for it.

I remember it, said Henry you wished *your mother might be found out*; and I imagined you alluded only to her name. I have not seen the property of my father, which has been accumulated by self−denial and perseverance, made subservient to the purposes of extravagance in another, without great pain; and the greater, because it became so by his vow to love and cherish that other: but, my dear Charlotte, I am happy to find you are not implicated in it. The dreadful idea that you were privy to the plot has sometimes crossed my mind, though I always strove to banish it instantly, as unworthy both of you and myself.

I am too near my mother to escape suspicion, said I. Even Eleanor, as her niece, and one of her family, perhaps may not have escaped it wholly; but I told you, at the same memorable time, I referred to before, that whatever discoveries might be made to the prejudice of the Montgomeries, none could ever be made to the disadvantage of Miss Mowbray. She was made acquainted with my Mother's intention of marrying Mr. Winterdale when I was, and thought of it as I did, but she made fewer remonstrances, as believing she had less right to make them. She has no fault, but that of having lived with us.

If that were the case, said Eleanor, with a charming smile, I must have another I could not repent of my fault.

I gave her a look of love and gratitude, then, turning to Henry, I proceeded. As to our circumstances, my cousin was totally ignorant of them till she came to reside with us. We then concealed nothing from her; and our misfortunes, though the consequence of imprudence, as what are termed misfortunes generally are, did not induce her to abandon us to our fate. I declare that, next to heaven, she has been my support under reflections which would otherwise have been insupportable.

Henry fixed his eyes upon Eleanor while I was speaking, and, when I had ended, exclaimed, Ah! I could not be mistaken!

You may be assured, said I, that this formidable plot had only one woman in it; and, you know, Scrub says there is no plot without one.

There is only one I do not acquit from the bottom of my soul, said Henry. Every person must condemn her conduct; and it truly grieves me that I cannot respect the wife of my father, and the parent and relation of my beloved and ingenuous friends. It will not, however, as she, herself observed, be wholly unattended with good consequences. Her profusion has already corrected my father's extreme frugality, and I hope his sparing hand will restrain her thoughtless extravagance.

Dear Henry, said I, so may it prove! and may I never have any more faults to acknowledge to you, at the hazard of losing my portion of your esteem! This has lain heavy at my heart, and does still; so heavy, that I shall be very careful to avoid self reproach in future.

Farewell, my dear Harriet. The road before me becomes smoother, by every confession of my past errors. If I marry, and if Montgomery be the man, I have only to fear his father, as the judge of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 34. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, July 25, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

I seem to have recovered the good opinion of Mr. Winterdale. Whether his own reflections, or the representations of his son, or the allurements of my father's estate, have been my advocates, I know not; but certain it is, that he treats me with the same kindness as before.

Charlotte, said he to me, one day, you have been a naughty girl; and many young men would be afraid to marry you after such imprudence; but I blame your mother more than you. She has been your model and your preceptress; and a young girl, like you, could not easily withstand both precept and example, when they pointed to pleasure. However, I hope she will now be a warning to you; and, if you reflect properly, perhaps, a worthy respectable man may venture upon you yet.

I am fully sensible of my fault, said I, and fully determined against every thing of the same kind for the future; but I would have no man venture upon me, till time have proved my sincerity.

Very right, returned Mr. Winterdale. You are young enough to wait; and no prudent man could take you at present. If you gain your cause, which I think is not to be doubted, your husband must be content to sacrifice one year of your income to the payment of your debts; and you must expiate a little of your fault by requiring no pin money; and then matters will be restored to their proper level. If, by any strange perversion of right, you lose your cause, no man could marry you at all, unless he were out of his senses; or were the cheated credulous fool that I have been.

My voluntary confession to you, Sir, said I, is some security against the latter: the former is out of my power.

What! to bewitch a man out of his senses! exclaimed Mr. Winterdale. What are sparkling eyes, and glowing cheeks, and enchanting smiles given you for, but to drive mankind out of their senses? At least, what other use do you make of them? Add to these, pretended tenderness and assiduity, in case of a broken leg, and the poor man is irretrievably lost.

I sincerely hope that no accident of that kind will again subject you to female influence, Sir, said I.

O, no; you may depend upon that, said Mr. Winterdale. Now I am tied by the leg, I should not be overloaded with female tenderness, if I were to break both. But now we are upon the subject of your marriage, Charlotte, I must give you a caution. Your candour in owning your fault, makes some atonement for it; and I should not like to see you throw yourself away. I suspect that Montgomery. I think he comes here dangling after you. His family I have no objection to; it is your own, and we will let it pass; but I will answer for it he is in debt, as sure as his name is Montgomery; and much more reasonable that a subaltern officer should be, than a sober widow, or a modest young lady. And that he is a libertine is equally certain. Idleness and bad company make them all such. Whatever you do, never marry a soldier.

I have no inclination to marry a soldier, I assure you, Sir, said I. They have no medium between too much leisure, and too much fatigue. The one is dangerous to the morals; the other to the constitution. Besides, I should not choose to have my husband of a profession that must necessarily separate me from him.

You judge very rightly, Charlotte, said Mr. Winterdale. What must the feelings of a woman be, who could be happy while her husband was messing with a parcel of young rakes at home, or committing murder abroad? Nay, perhaps being murdered! I do not like soldiers myself; and if I were master of my own house, I would turn Montgomery out of it, the next time he makes his appearance. I believe he wants your fortune: but mind what I say Wait. You may yet find some deserving man that will have you.

I thanked Mr. Winterdale for his advice, and was proceeding to tell him that it was my intention to wait, when a servant announced Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp. Mr. Winterdale, without staying to receive any of their compliments, made his escape at one door, as they entered at the other.

Ever since Mr. Sharp has been acquainted with my Chancery suit, he shuns me as if it were contagious. He now seated himself by Eleanor, and began a conversation, in which he left her little to say. Mrs. Thacker spared my tongue at the expence of my ears, till my mother joined us, when I was left at liberty to make my own observations.

My dear Lady Winterdale, said that lady, you can't conceive how monstrous glad I am that you have jockeyed your gentleman. We have heard all how and about it; for, in such a little petty *willage* as this here, you know nothing can't be kept a secret, for servants. Every thing runs like wild fire; and every body knows that you have run old Hunco Munco twenty thousand pound in debt, before you married him.

Your news runs more like a snowball, which gathers as it goes, said my mother. I do owe some trifles, but altogether do not amount to half that sum: and you will oblige me very much, if when you have occasion to speak to me of Mr. Winterdale, you do not call him old Hunco Munco.

O, certainly, if your Ladyship does not like it, I won't, replied Mrs. Thacker. I beg your pardon. I generally say what comes topmost; and I'm sure I thought, after tricking him so cleverly, your Ladyship would not care a farthing what anybody called him.

You are quite mistaken, said my mother. I always treat Mr. Winterdale with the respect due to my husband, and it is my wish that nobody should forget he is a gentleman.

Well, I won't *forgit* it *agin*, said Mrs. Thacker. Your Ladyship is a lady of *wery* refined notions of *purprioty* and *dickorum* and all that: but give me a *voman* of spirit; and your Ladyship does not want for spirit, neither. I'm *purdigiously* glad you've made the shiners fly. As my Mr. Thacker observes in the pulpit, *Riches makes to themselves wings, and fly away*; but Mr. Winterdale had clapped them up so close in his chest, that he thought they had not room to make their wings; nor never a hole to get out at, if they was ready made; but your Ladyship

has been too many for him. The men may call themselves the Lords of the creation, and make a fuss about their *progaties,* but we poor, weak females seldom knock under. I know I'd be a match for my gentleman, if he was Archbishop of Canterbury.

I now listened on the other side, and heard Mr. Sharp say, in a low voice, to Eleanor. One would think my aunt, was my own aunt, instead of my aunt−in−law, by her *sharpness.* I should think *ivery* woman must be a match for her husband; or they could *niver* have made a match of it. Should not you, Miss Mowbray? After having laughed heartily at his own conceit, and provoked Eleanor to join him, he seemed to resume his former subject. Come, now, my dear Miss Mowbray;" said he, now do tell me if you think it was pretty behaviour.

I am no judge of it, replied Eleanor.

But I know you are a judge of it, said Mr. Sharp. You are a judge of *ivery think* in the world. Now, would you have done so?

I cannot say what I *would* have done, answered Eleanor: it is enough for me to say what I *have* done.

Why I would lay any money, said Mr. Sharp, that you owe nobody *nothink* at all.

You would win any money, if you did, said Eleanor; but I have never been under the temptation Lady Winterdale has. I have lived with prudent careful people, and always had more money than I wished to spend.

Well, and so have I, rejoined Mr. Sharp. It's very odd we two should be so much *aliky.* If I was to go to try, to spend my income, I could not do it, for the life and soul of me. Not that I am over and above saving neither; for I always please my fancy, and *niver* grudge myself any think I've a mind of. Last year I was at Brighton; and I subscribed to the rooms, and the master of the *ceremony,* and the *libery,* and *ivery think*; and I gave a guinea for a few sea weeds, and two guineas for a pretty little dog.

You have no inclination for horses, carriages, and gaming, said Eleanor; or you might soon find the way to want money.

O, dear, no, replied Mr. Sharp. I do not so much as keep a horse for my own riding. I think they are very dangerous things. I have wondered many a time and often how any man could *iver* first get upon the back of *sich* a great, big, wilful, animal, and pull him by the mouth. For my part, I think one's safest afoot. If I go a little way, I always walk; and if I have far to go, I take my carriage; but as to being fond of carriages, and *brooshes*, and mail−coach *thingumties,* and four−in−hands, and them things, why it is quite out of my way. And as to gaming, why I like a game at cards, now and then, because it brings good company together; but I am none of the deepest: I only play for a little *amoosment.*

You do not spend money in company and a large establishment,' said Eleanor.

I have a very good house at home, said Mr. Sharp, and *ivery think* very comfortable; and I've very nice dinners, and live very well; and I have a housekeeper and a girl under her, and a coachman, and a footman, and all that: and I have left the housekeeper at home now, to take care of things; and the coachman to mind his horses, and the garden; and I gave the girl leave to go and see her friends; but I pay her her wages; so you see, I am not *necessiated* to stay at my uncle Thacker's.

Perhaps you stay for the sake of society, as you have only servants in your own house, said Eleanor.

Ah! Miss Mowbray! replied Mr. Sharp, you have hit the right nail on the head! But continued he, lowering his voice still more, it is not for the sake of the society of my uncle and aunt, though I am a very dutiful and

affectionate *nevvy;* but I have *somethink* to *commoonicate* to you, when we have an opportunity, that will surprize you.

Mrs. Thacker's voice now wholly overpowered that of Mr. Sharp, and I was obliged to listen on her side. *Vell, vell,* said the lady, you are the best judge of your own affairs; but, I know I should never be sorry for it. I was not bred and born in London for nothing. I know all the great folks run into debt, and most of them never think about paying. You know another thing too; and that is, they pay through the nose, when they do pay. My father was in business himself, and I have heard him say he could not afford to sell his *marchandice* so cheap to a Lord as to his next door neighbour. Let the trades−folks trust; they lay it on. I'm sure I think your ladyship has behaved *wery* honourable to make Mr. Winterdale pay them at last; and no harm done to him, neither. What's gold good for, locked in a chest? Let it *circlate,* I say.

Indeed, said my mother, I had no other alternative. I could not live without food and clothes; and my servants and horses must eat. I only had a small party now and then; nothing to what many women of fashion have; and I take heaven to witness I was very sorry, when I found I could not pay the people! But what could I do? I could not make money! so I thought when Mr. Winterdale and I felt a mutual regard, it was a good opportunity to satisfy them, without doing any real injury to him. He does not enjoy less; he has only less to reckon.

Your Ladyship forgets, said I, that reckoning his money was Mr. Winterdale's only enjoyment.

Be quiet, Charlotte, said my mother. I do not like you to argue against me. I had rather have the Squire and the Parson, together, for my opponents than you alone. Pardon me, Mrs. Thacker, I mean no reflection upon your husband.

I pardon you with all my heart. said Mrs. Thacker. Pray reflect upon him as much as you please. I no more mind having the parson against me, than this pinch of snuff; and I should mind the Squire as little; only you insist upon my treating him with respect.

Miss Montgomery is a very tenacious disputant, said my mother. If one hunts her out of one argument she lays hold of another. For my part, I hate argument. I would only just claim the privilege of doing whatever I liked, and leave all disputable points to the lovers of controversy. One must talk a little in defence of one's actions when people are so unconscionable as not to be pleased with them; but as for opinions, I give them to the world's discretion; for I would not say a single word to prevail upon the world to adopt them. But, Charlotte, your present argument is not unanswerable; for, if I have robbed Mr. Winterdale of a part of his former enjoyment, I have opened a new source for him; and I do not despair of increasing it, in time. He has lately acquired a knowledge of the pleasure of bestowing money.

If you have done that, said Mrs. Thacker, you deserve to be *catechised* for a saint, for no human *bein* could work such a *merricle.* But is it *possable* that you are so amazingly clever as to *larn* Mr. Winterdale to part with his money? For God's sake, tell me your secret, that I may practice it a little upon Mr. Thacker.

Pardon me, replied my mother. You might be canonized too; and it were unreasonable that all wives should become saints.

Ah! said Mr. Sharp; no fear of that. My aunt's days of saintship are over. For my part, I think no lady can be a saint after she is married. One may adore pretty young ladies, like Miss Mowbray, and bow the knee before them.

Mr. Sharp, said I, you are unusually brilliant to−day; but I am not so fortunate as to come in for a share of your fine speeches. Is Saint Charlotte struck out of your calender?

O, dear, no; to be sure not, answered Mr. Sharp; though I can't say I *iver* heard of *sich* a saint, neither.

Perhaps, said I, you never heard of a saint being drawn into a law−suit, for the preservation of her estate.

That would be a new kind of martyrdom, said Eleanor.

A very terrible one, indeed, said Mr. Sharp. I'm sure I would not become a saint at such an expence, for all the world.

If I must purchase the crown of martyrdom, said I, it should rather be by patiently enduring the tortures of the law, than by submitting to any of the old fashioned recipes for cooking saints; such as cutting into steaks or cutlets, or broiling whole on a gridiron.

O, shocking! exclaimed Mr. Sharp, I wonder how a *delicot*, sensible young lady could come to go to think of *sich* a thing!

You are a little shocking, indeed, Charlotte, said my mother.

I beg your Ladyship's pardon, as Mrs. Thacker did just now; for, like her, I spoke what came *topmost.*

But, said Mrs. Thacker, it is well my gentleman is not here; for we have run away from our *subjick.* Now, my dear Lady Winterdale, do tell me, of all the contrivances upon earth, what could *possably* make Mr. Winterdale give away his money.

I should like to know that too, said Mr. Sharp; for I should think it one of the very *unlikeliest* and *improbablest* things that *iver* I knew in all my life. Now, my lady, let me beg of you now, to have the goodness, to be so obliging as to tell us.

There is nothing more simple. replied my mother. Mr. Winterdale found his money must go, whether he would or not; and he chose that some of it should go under his own direction.

Is that all? demanded Mr. Sharp. It was easy to be generous, when it cost him *nothink.*

And a very good way too, said Mrs. Thacker; but I spend so much, myself, that I don't leave Mr. Thacker a great deal, to shew his generosity.

It seems you have only to marry, said Eleanor to Mr. Sharp, to be able to get rid of your money.

I hope *my* lady will not be too extravagant, returned. Mr. Sharp, but I do think I shall venture, if I can find *iver* a *bootiful*, sensible, amiable, young lady that will have me.

If I was a tall, genteel gentleman, with a good house, and a handsome carriage, and fourscore thousand pounds in my pocket, I should never be afraid of that, said Mrs. Thacker. I would strike up to the best of them. Why, they are but flesh and blood, as well as yourself.

O, dear, aunt, said Mr. Sharp, I vow you make me blush. To be sure, I have a good house, and a handsome carriage, and *sich like*, and, I must needs say, I'm tall enough; but as for being genteel, I'm sure I think *nothink* at all about that; though it is very kind of you to encourage me, and let me have your good word.

How unlucky is it that Mrs. Thacker is married. If she had not been the wife of the uncle, you might have wooed her to accept the nephew, said I.

You are joking now, said Mr. Sharp;, I love my aunt, as my aunt; but I should like one a little younger for my wife.

Hold you there! cried Mrs. Thacker. If I was a *widder*, I might *purtend* to one as young as yourself, without any *purdigious wanity*, or *impurprioty*. You fine gentlemen think a lady is nothing but lumber, when she is turned of thirty. [Nota bene, Mrs. Thacker meant to say forty.] But I forgive you. Go on, and prosper.

Mrs. Thacker finished the conversation by inviting us to dinner, tea, and supper, for next Thursday se'nnight. She told us, with an air of importance, that her entertainment would be quite in style, and begged we would prevail upon Mr. Henry Winterdale to accompany us; adding, as a great secret, that she should engage music, for the young folks to dance.

Mr. Sharp then claimed the honour of dancing with his old partner, with as much confidence as if the dancing with her once had given him a title to her ever after: an honour she accorded with a sigh.

My dear Harriet, if you are weary of this idle prattle, say so, and I have done. I cannot make Mr. Sharp a man of sense; or Mrs. Thacker a well−informed woman; and I have no variety; except an accidental tête−à−tête I had with Montgomery, which would be still less interesting to a third person. I shall therefore only tell you that he continues to worship

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 35. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Aug. 1, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

After certain hints and innuendoes in my last, you will not be surprised at my venturing to congratulate my cousin, on her conquest of Mr. Sharp. We had each of us a smile on her countenance, when we were joined by Henry. Whether our subject had rendered our smiles particularly interesting, I know not; but they excited his curiosity, and he inquired their cause. Eleanor was silent.

If you will not answer Henry, I will, said I.

Still silent.

Then you must know, continued I, my cousin and I are so equally charming, that, like Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, a certain gentle shepherd found himself obliged to fall in love with both of us. Do you doubt it? demanded I.

By no means, replied Henry, gravely, and with some alarm; thinking, I believe, that I alluded to himself.

Then I proceed, said I. You know, when our merits were exactly even, a hair would turn the scale. What, then must my vexatious law−suit do? I am sorry to confess that *I have been weighed in the balance, and been found* not *wanting*; but overloaded; while the unencumbered Eleanor has gained the prize.

What prize? may I ask? said Henry, who seemed relieved from one alarm only to experience another.

No less, replied I, than the tall and slender, gentle, and gentleman−like, Mr. Sharp. But I should have made you wait a month for a secret so precious.

You could not have been so malicious, said Henry. It is what I might have expected. Neither gentle or ungentle could be safe from the attractions of Miss Mowbray.

Indeed, said Eleanor, it is nothing but a whim of Charlotte's. She fancies Mr. Sharp has not paid her so much attention, since he was informed of her law−suit; and consequently he has paid me more.

Don't provoke me, said I. Did not he say he thought he should venture to marry, if a beautiful, sensible, amiable, affable, agreeable, adorable young lady would have him?

Surely it does not follow that he meant me, said Eleanor.

Why no, said Henry; If that be all, he might as well mean Charlotte.

I thank you, said I; but I tell you my law−suit puts me entirely out of the question. He would as soon *meet a bear i' th' mouth*.

But, said Eleanor, there may be other young women who answer the description. It could not necessarily be either of us.

Not many who deserve it so well, I am afraid, said Henry.

Did not he talk of adoring you, and bowing the knee to you? demanded I.

Mere compliment words of course, replied Eleanor.

I think our Eleanor's conquest is doubtful, said Henry, if Mr. Sharp addressed her in such words as these the language of common rant; not real love!

Still incredulous, said I, what pains it costs me to convince Eleanor she is beloved; or you that she is likely to be so! Did not he, said I to Eleanor, display his riches and generosity to tempt you? Did not he say he had given two guineas for a puppy, and one for a bundle of weeds; thereby insinuating that his wife should be entitled to throw away money also? Did not he congratulate himself that you were both *aliky*? and did not he say he had *somethink to commoonicate* that would surprise you? you are determined to be surprised, I think, for you will not suspect till you have a downright declaration.

Eleanor and Henry could not help laughing: but the gentleman resumed his gravity in a moment. I beg your pardon, said he, I have no right to laugh at Mr. Sharp. It is possible you may not disapprove his pretensions.

I know not what his pretensions are, said Eleanor; but, if they are of the kind you mean, surely I cannot be so very like Mr. Sharp as to countenance them! Surely no woman of common sense could feel any thing for him but pity!

Pity, in a susceptible bosom, is sister to love, said Henry.

Pity for sufferings of which we believe ourselves the cause may, rejoined Eleanor; but certainly not the pity we bestow upon weakness: that is more nearly allied to contempt.

To be serious, said I, you ought rather to beg Eleanor's pardon for daring to imagine she could entertain a thought of such a I was going to call him by some unhandsome name but he betrays such a poverty of understanding, that it would be giving the contempt to inanity which is due only to folly. I am so impressed with this idea, that, when I cannot help laughing at his *syllyisms*, I feel something of what I should feel, if I were laughing at bodily deformity.

I was to blame, said Henry. Had I considered for a moment, I could not have supposed a treasure no man can deserve could fall to the lot of Mr. Sharp. The pain I felt at the idea did not allow me to examine its probability.

Eleanor cast down her eyes; and the pure and eloquent blood which spoke in her cheeks was her only reply.

Mrs. Thacker has commissioned us to make a request to you, said I, which it would give us infinite pleasure to obtain.

It would be very painful to me to refuse it, then, said Henry.

She is going to have a party, and has invited us, of course; but she has also desired us to try our power over you. She wishes you would accompany us.

It would oblige us very much, said Eleanor; if you think you could do it with propriety.

Such a request, and so made, answered Henry, would overset all my notions of propriety, if they opposed it. Fortunately they do not: for though I would not have introduced any part of Mr. Thacker's family here, knowing how odious he is to my father, I am not sorry for an opportunity to shew Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp that I do not enter wholly into my father's resentments.

You may possibly draw some part of them upon yourself, said I, by your compliance with our wishes; and we will not take advantage of your good nature, to lay you under Mr. Winterdale's displeasure.

My dear Charlotte, said Henry, every man must have some guide for his actions and, as all are liable to err, he may as well err by the deficiency of his own judgment as that of another. If every action of my life were directed by my father, I could not hope to be always right; therefore I ought to be the responsible person for what is wrong. As far as my judgment goes, I will avoid every thing that can reasonably offend my father, and I have hitherto been so happy as to have succeeded, but the same principle would teach me to bear his displeasure, if I incurred it, as I thought, without a cause.

We submit to your decision, said I. Great was our heroism to argue against our wishes; for, be it known to you, Henry, as a great secret, and all great secrets ought to be made known to the first person we meet, that we are to have a ball! Did you ever hear of such a prodigy at Winterdale?

Never, replied Henry. I suppose Mrs. Thacker gives it in honour of Lady Winterdale and my sisters.

And much honour I expect it will reflect upon herself, said I. She gives dinner, tea, and supper. These country ladies think they can never do enough for us.

There is nothing so fatiguing as these all−day visits, said Eleanor. Eating, drinking, and talking, for so many hours together, wear one's spirits down to a shadow. I should dread Mrs. Thacker's hospitality of all things, if there were not a ball at the end of it.

Dear, delightful, dancing, cried I, how I worship thee! Thou canst make even plumb pudding and roast beef tolerable!

I pity Mrs. Thacker most; said Henry, who will not dance, and who will have only vanity to support her under the excessive fatigue of entertaining her company. In London you only provide the means, and leave the company to entertain themselves: here the lady of the house has a very laborious part to perform. It is her's to welcome every body, talk to every body, carve for every body, and keep an eye over every body's wants and comforts.

Then, said I, Mrs. Thacker has to be thankful for her lungs of brass, ready eloquence, and personal strength; qualities which I did not envy her for before. But Mr. Sharp will assist her in conversation: he will play treble to her base.

Instead of saving each other's exertions, they rather add to them, said Eleanor; for both talk at the same time, and each is obliged to raise the voice, in order to be heard.

I have often wondered Mr. Sharp's tongue did not tire, said I; for it is not supplied from so powerful a source as Mrs. Thacker's

The springs upon which it is hung are so elastic, that it is enabled to run easily, and does not call upon the lungs for any great exertion, said Henry. I hope, continued he, addressing himself to Eleanor, it has not been beforehand with me, in requesting the pleasure of dancing with you.

I am very sorry, replied Eleanor (and most sincere was her sorrow) but I am already engaged to dance with Mr. Sharp.

Henry made no answer. A dead silence ensued for a few moments, which I broke, by saying, Henry, why do not you ask me? I will take you at the rebound.

I durst not offer you a rejected man, said he: besides, upon second thoughts, I do not know that I shall dance.

Henry, soon after, left us; and left poor Eleanor to compare what she had accepted with what she had missed.

By the bye, my dear Harriet, the laws of dancing are very severe upon us females. Like other laws, they were made, I suppose, by lordly man; and, therefore, made much in his favour.

He enters a ball room; he looks round him, perhaps with a saucy air; he contemplates a number of young women, who are placed in ranks before him, dressed in their gayest apparel, and their best looks; and he singles out the object of his choice.. It is true the poor victim has a veto. She can say no; but then she forfeits the privilege of saying yes, as long as the ball shall last. There needs only a disagreeable man; imagine him like Dr. Johnson if you will, with a brown coat, a huge wig, and a snuffy nose, or like Mr. Sharp, with a person like a walking stick, and a tongue like the moment hand of a clock, always moving, though not to so good a purpose; to spoil an evening's amusement; leaving a poor girl the blessed alternative of spoiling it by dancing with a frightful or a despicable object; or by sitting still. If ever I am commissioned to regulate matters here below, I will alter this.

My next will contain an account of the Elephant's Ball; but we have something to get through before we reach it. Mr. Winterdale is to be made acquainted with our purpose, and, after all, our dancing shoes may have to wade through the mire; for no other conveyance have we, and none can we have, unless some kind fairy should send us a car, drawn by doves or peacocks. As to a post−chaise, it would be equally absurd to send six miles for one, in order to carry us little more than a quarter of a mile; and for Lady Winterdale and her daughter to be seen to step out of it, if we did.

After wishing myself an agreeable partner, if with a smart cockade, so much the better, I conclude this epistle, by assuring you of the unalterable affection of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 36. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Aug. 8, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

THE evening preceding that of Mrs. Thacker's Ball, my mother informed Mr. Winterdale of it, and of her intention to go. He stormed as usual. She was silent, till he had exhausted his breath and his ideas, when she said, Mr. Winterdale, it distresses me to put you in these passions; but I thought if we went without letting you know, you would not be the less angry.

The way to prevent my anger, replied he, would be not to think of going at all

That would be very unreasonable, said her Ladyship: you had much better go with us.

I go with you! exclaimed Mr. Winterdale. I would as soon make a party with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to sup in the fiery furnace!

I dare say Mr. Thacker would think himself much honoured by your company, and all animosity might be forgotten.

I visit that scoundrel, Thacker! I forget all animosity! What's in the wind now? how came such ideas to enter your Ladyship's head?

Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, if your resolutions are not to be shaken, you cannot expect me to swerve from mine. You have no mind to go to Mr. Thacker's, it seems: do as you like. I have a mind to go; and I shall do as I like. Henry, said she, I hope you have not already made laws, like those of the Medes and Persians, which alter not. Mrs. Thacker has requested the favour of your company: I hope you will not refuse to go.

Miss Montgomery and Miss Mowbray have informed me of it, said Henry, and I shall have the pleasure of attending your ladyship, and them.

The devil you will! exclaimed Mr. Winterdale. Are you to be master too?

Of one very inconsiderable being only, Sir myself.

I think you must pretend to be master of me, if you go in defiance of my positive commands; which you will do, if you go at all.

Pardon me, Sir; in matters which regard only myself, I must take the liberty to judge for myself. Simply to go to the vicarage, independent of all other considerations, is what common good neighbourhood would oblige me to do. As the vicar has unfortunately offended you, I have forborne all intercourse with his family; but, when they come here, when they invite me to renew the acquaintance, the obligation returns, and I cannot evade it, without seeming to encourage a vindictive spirit.

Lady Winterdale, you have set up the standard of rebellion in my family, and my only son already ranges himself under it. My servants will come next, and tell me they cannot execute my orders, without encouraging some improper spirit. The spirit of darkness and disobedience rules you all. Am I to stand for nothing? Am I to be reduced to a cypher, in a house I once commanded, and which is still called mine? Is my wife to tell me she shll do as she likes, and my son that he shall judge for himself, and am I to make my bow, and say, Just as you please?

Certainly, replied my mother. You have existed all these years under a great mistake; and I hope you will one day thank me for setting you right. As to servants, they owe obedience to your lawful commands, because that is the express stipulation on which they are cloathed and fed; a covenant made by their own consent. They transfer to you the direction of their hands and feet, and capacities, on condition of your giving certain garments to the men, and a certain stipend, and as much meat and drink as their appetites may require, to all. But, without this compact, do you believe you can have a right to command any of your fellow creatures, and, as such your equals? Do you believe, for instance, because you have given me your name, and made me mistress of your family, that you have a right to command me? Or, that Henry, because he is of your own blood, and heir to your estate, owes you unconditional submission? Certainly not.

Such logic as this, said Mr. Winterdale, with a deep sigh, has ruined my authority, as a husband and a father.

Again! exclaimed his lady, Shall I never prevail upon you to discard those naughty words! Instead of commands and authority, why will you not be content to be beloved and respected?

Good God! cried Mr. Winterdale, was there ever a woman that talked so rightly and acted so wrong! Henry, stop your ears against the voice of this syren, lest she persuade you, that to injure your father is to love him, and to ridicule is to respect him?

My opinions do not, in all points, coincide with those of Lady Winterdale, said Henry, and are not, in any point, influenced by them. This is the first instance in which I have ventured to dispute your will: others may occur; but nothing can eradicate from my bosom the love I have always borne you, and nothing soften the pain I feel in acting contrary to your wishes, but the conviction, that, as every man is responsible to the Almighty Power that made him for his own actions, they should be directed by his own judgment.

Mr. Winterdale shrunk into nothing at this reply of his son. His boasted fabric of authority melted away, and he seemed almost an object of compassion.

The day arrived. We dressed. Henry told us we were armed at all points for conquest. My mother stepped into the parlour where her husband was sitting. My dear Mr. Winterdale, said she; I come to bid you good bye; but I declare I have had such unforeseen difficulties to encounter, that I did not know whether I should ever be able to set out for the vicarage. Indeed, I don't know yet whether I shall ever get there. I cannot imagine how I could be so thoughtless. I have not a thing in the world that is not more than six months' old, and, consequently, not fit to be seen; and yet it never entered my head to send to town for something modern! I shall disgrace you shockingly!

At these words, Mr. Winterdale could not avoid casting his eyes over the habiliments of his wife, which were tasteful and elegant, as well as costly; and who might, herself, have passed for a very handsome woman, just turned of thirty. He spoke not; but his looks expressed his approbation.

And, would you believe it, continued she; I never once discovered that I had not a carriage, till this moment, that I am going to set out, and find I am obliged to walk! One shower of rain would have spoiled all! Thank God it is fair; and the horrid cart road we have to cross, on the outside of the park, is dry; but it is dreadfully out of

character, for the wife of Mr. Winterdale to walk! I declare I should die with shame and vexation, if any of the neighbouring families should be there, and hear Lady Winterdale's great coat and cork soled shoes called, when we came away.

Lady Winterdale, said her husband, starting from his seat, is it possible that you can think of a carriage, when one of the express conditions of our marriage was that you should do, as you were then doing, without one; and when I am paying large sums of money every day, for your former extravagance?

I really did not think of it, returned her Ladyship, till I find I cannot do without one. If you reflect for a moment on the inconsistency of your wife; you, who are the sole representative of a long line of honourable and worshipful ancestors; of your wife, paddling through the mud to her visits, and following her lanthorn home again, you will be shocked, as well as myself.

Mr. Winterdale was going to reply, doubtless on the lanthorn side of the question, when her Ladyship put her hand on his mouth. I will have no argument now, said she. I shall not see you again for eight or ten hours, and I will have the satisfaction, all that time, of thinking you are pleased with me. She then kissed her hand which had touched his lips, and tripped out of the room.

We marched under the shade of our parasols to the Vicarage; my mother leaning on Henry's arm; Eleanor and I following; and, to give the procession all the dignity in our power, Mendall and Robert, in their state habits, behind; leaving poor Mr. Winterdale no earthly companion, save Signior Carlo, Henry's spaniel. I could not help feeling a little remorse, though I do not pretend to so much as would excite a wish to remain at home with him.

We found a family at the Vicarage, of the name of Elrington, to whom Mrs. Thacker introduced us. They live within four miles of us, and are sufficiently agreeable to be very desirable neighbours; but Mr. Winterdale's disposition has placed some barrier between us and every body. There is actually a suit now pending between him and Mr. Elrington, in consequence of an accidental trespass; which is to be tried very soon. The whole family, consisting of father, mother, son, and two daughters, very politely lamented this circumstance, as depriving them of a share of the acquisition their neighbourhood had received in us.

Mr. and Mrs. Thacker treated Henry Winterdale with particular respect; and if his father were composed of common materials, this visit might, indeed, be the means of burying former grievances in oblivion.

The rest of our company was a selection of the clerical, medical, and legal if you will allow the word gentry of the town and country; some sensible, some insensible that is to say stupid; some rather genteel; others making inordinate pretensions to gentility; fashion every where out of the question. But, really, Harriet, fashion is a factitious thing, and one may live very well without it. Now I have been six months out of its vortex, I will own to you that I like simple nature full as well.

Last, though not least, in the estimation of us dancing damsels, were the officers from the neighbouring town, Montgomery among the rest.

Mr. Sharp took upon himself the office of placing us at table, and took especial care to reserve for himself a chair next to that of Eleanor. He seated Mr. Elrington by my mother, Mr. Francis Elrington by me, Henry by Miss Elrington, and Montgomery by Miss Elizabeth. How happy might a little alteration have made some of us, who now listened with more attention to time conversa− *I* tion which passed between our neighbours, than that addressed to ourselves. Mr. Sharp seemed to consider Eleanor as his own property, and by his perpetual talking to her, and frequent laughter, forbade the approach of any other person. Eleanor endeavoured to look at ease under his encroachments; but, unpractised in the art of dissimulation, she could not succeed. Henry managed still worse: for, in the midst of a fascinating speech from Miss Elrington, having his eyes fixed upon Eleanor, he started suddenly and said, I beg your pardon, Madam, I did not perfectly comprehend what you were saying.

Montgomery acquitted himself better to her sister; but I could not help observing that he, now and then, cast an intelligent, anxious look towards his namesake.

The table of Mrs. Thacker sustained a load of every species of fish, flesh and fowl, that her money and industry could assemble; and of every genus and variety of tarts, and tartlets, custards, jellies and trifles. We were pressed to taste of every thing, and I do believe it took us full two hours, to travel through the different stages of our dinner. I began to imagine that if the gentlemen drank in proportion to their eating, we might get a night's rest before the ball; but they joined us between eight and nine o'clock, and at ten we were ushered into the parson's tythe barn, transformed into a ball room.

Mrs. Thacker had really shewn more taste in the decoration of this place than I imagined she possessed; for, without endeavouring to hide its being a barn, she had rendered it neat, appropriate, and convenient. The floor was of stone, nicely swept, and covered with matting, except the space left for the dancers. The seats were benches, spread with dry moss; and all round the walls, above our heads, were hung real forks and rakes, which supported lights on their numerous teeth and prongs.

A small bay, at one end of the barn, elevated above the rest, was arched over with roots and moss, in the form of a grotto; a heavy oaken table, that had borne the tythe dinner of many a successive incumbent, was spread with negus, lemonade, macaroons, and various other refreshments; and, around the walls were arranged rustic chairs of roots, nailed together in fantastic forms. The lank−haired coachman, and the chubby−faced plough boy, the one transformed into a venerable hermit, with a brown gown, a girdle and a rosary; and the other into a novice of the same order, attended to serve the company.

We crowded round Mrs. Thacker with expressions of admiration; and she received our praises with unrestrained delight.

I told you, said she, it would be quite the thing! O, I have been used to *wery* great doings in London, I once was thinking whether I could not *interduce* the river, and the *wessels*, and the *vherries*, and all them things; but, thinks I to myself, I live in the country, and a country lady I'll be content to be, and not *purtend* to be above my place. The barn's a barn, and so it shall remain. As to the *grotter*, I must own I think its a mighty rural fancy; and its all my own *inwention*; only I once saw one like it in a nobleman's park; and the *hurmit* is Mr. Thacker's doings. I had a mind of a pretty smart shepherd and shepherdess, with pink jackets and green shoulder knots, such as we had in *chany*, over the chimney piece of our parlour in London, instead of them horrid tammy gowns; but one must let the gentlemen have their way, sometimes, you know. Pray what does your Ladyship think of these *here* matters?

I think, replied Lady Winterdale, they could not have been better. You would have found great difficulty in bringing the Thames and the shipping into this barn; and, if you could have succeeded, they would not have been so proper as its own beams and rafters,

Why, so I thought, returned Mrs. Thacker; and so I gave up my *projick*. I was only afraid them *wulgar* forks and rakes would look as if one did not know nothing of life.

They do not remind one of the river and shipping, certainly, said my mother; but they are very much in character with the tythe barn.

Well, I'm monstrous glad you like 'em, said Mrs. Thacker, because you are a lady of excessive high taste, and have lived, in London as *vell* as myself. And pray what does your Ladyship think of the brown tammy?

I admire it exceedingly, answered my mother. Your idea of a shepherd and shepherdess would have been charming, if you had assembled us on a lawn; but as you have made such a beautiful cell for your refreshments,

you have done perfectly right to place them under the care of a pair of hermits.

Mr. Sharp now led fair Eleanor to the top of the room, and held himself in readiness to begin the dance: Mr. Francis Elrington made his bow to me, and we followed: Montgomery joined us, with Miss Elrington: Henry sat by my mother, and left Miss Elizabeth to whoever might sue for the honour of being her partner. A little smart sprig of a clergyman obtained it; and, the other young people having formed themselves into couples, we began to dance.

When Mr. Sharp had occasion to take my hand in the dance, he nodded his head, and, with a familiar smile, said, *How do you do?* When he met me a second time, he said, *How do you do by this time?* When a third, *How do you do again?* A ceremony he scarcely ever failed to perform during the whole evening.

This extreme solicitude after my hea1th reminded me of the answer made on such an occasion by the great Mr. Walker, of Rotheram, the founder of the fortune of a numerous family; and if I had dared to take the liberty Mr. Walker did, I should have made Mr. Sharp the same reply.

The old gentleman was going to London in a post chaise, with a friend, to obtain a patent for some mechanical invention; and, being absorbed in his own plans, was silent. The companion, determined to make himself agreeable, after a ride of some miles, said, How do you do, Mr. Walker? I'm very well, thank you, answered Mr. Walker, dryly, and resumed his meditations. A short time after, the companion made another effort to be sociable, by repeating his question. Vexed to be again interrupted, Mr. Walker replied, I'm much the same as when you asked me before. If I ail aught, I'll tell you.

To return to Mrs. Thacker's ball. After two dances we sat down, I placed myself on one side my mother, and Henry rose to make room for Eleanor on the other. She took the offered seat with a slight bow, and three quarters of a smile; but before she was fixed in it, Mr. Sharp had squeezed himself in at her elbow. Henry then walked to another part of the room.

O dear, said Mr. Sharp to me, across Eleanor and my mother, we have had what I call the very *pleasantest* and *agreeblist* dance that *iver* I had in all my life. Have not we Miss Mowbray?

Pray, said Eleanor to me, reaching before my mother, and of course, turning her back to Mr. Sharp, are not we to change partners every two dances?

I hope we are, answered I. Does not your Ladyship think so?

Certainly, replied my mother. I will speak to Mrs. Thacker about it.

My mother then left us, and I kept her seat vacant a few minutes, to see if Henry would take it; but though he observed us at a distance, he made no attempt to come nearer. Mr. Sharp's animal spirits ran over into a thousand monkey tricks. He snatched Eleanor's fan; tapped her on the shoulder with it; then fanned her; then himself. '
Now, said he, do tell me what you two and Lady Winterdale have been saying. I would give a guinea to find it out. I should like of all things to know what ladies say when they whisper.

They whisper that you may not know, said I.

Then it's no good, I'm sure, returned he.

To convince you it is not bad, I will tell you, said I. Lady Winterdale thinks we are to change partners every two dances, and she is gone to ask Mrs. Thacker.

Mr. Sharp jumped off his seat like a squirrel, exclaiming, Not bad! It's too bad! and went immediately to Mrs. Thacker; my mother and Henry making part of the same group.

I find, said he, there is a plot going forward to part me and Miss Mowbray, but we shall not suffer any *sich* a thing. I know your Ladyship is afraid of me; for you would not trust me in the post chaise, when we went to the ball; but we know one another better now, and I assure you we won't be parted.

Fiddle, faddle, said Mrs. Thacker: everyone in his turn. You must not think of *mopolizing* Miss Mowbray. Besides, it's quite ungenteel. At all these *here* grand private dances, if there is ever such a *quantity* of people, they are supposed to be friends, and they chop and change, and every one has the same chance as another.

You might let Miss Mowbray and me keep together, if it was not quite the fashion, said Mr. Sharp; as this is your own ball, and I am my uncle'sown nevvy.

Impossible! said Lady Winterdale. You could not set an example, and forbid your company to follow it.

O said Mrs. Thacker, we know better than that. You have committed one *conqruelty* already, in leading Miss Mowbray to the top of the room, before Miss Montgomery. To be sure clergymen's daughters are ladies all the world over, as well as clergymen's *vives*, but they can't take place of the daughter of a knight and *baroknight.*

Well, said Mr. Sharp, if I must submit, I must; but I'll go, this minute, and carry her the ill news; and I'll secure her for *ivery* second two dances, throughout the whole evening.

The next two dances I danced with Montgomery, and Eleanor with Mr. Francis Elrington; and, before they were finished, Henry attended my mother into the drawing room, and we saw him no more till supper.

To give you an account of our supper so soon after our dinner, would be to pall your appetite: it is enough to tell you that it was good and abundant. When it was ended, we again adjourned to the ball room.

As several of the gentlemen remained at table with Mr. Thacker, Miss Elrington was left without a partner. Henry, who had not yet arrived at that pitch of good breeding which could stare an unengaged young lady in the face, and say, with a smile, *Why don't you dance?I wonder you won't dance!* begged to have the honour of going down the next two dances with her. Eleanor was dancing with Mr. Sharp; he having executed his threat of engaging her for every two alternate dances, during the evening.

When they were ended, Eleanor took advantage of Mr. Sharp's quitting her a moment, to take my arm, and lead me into the hermit's cell, So soon after supper it was empty, and we seated ourselves in an obscure corner, where we might converse, unseen and unheard by any. Charlotte, said the poor girl, is this pleasure? Is this amusement? I love dancing, but what have I suffered from the incessant teazing of Mr. Sharp! I am so weary, and so angry, that I could call him names!

Pray do, my dear, said I; it will relieve your troubled spirit.

An empty coxcomb! cried she, a persecuting, busy, meddling intruder! He love! He loves nothing but to hear himself talk! I begin to think society ought to be regulated upon Mr. Winterdale's plan; that we should have the liberty to tell people when we are tired of them.

That were a glorious privilege; said I; but in the present instance it would avail nothing. Mr. Sharp would not believe you, and would endeavour to argue you out of your feelings.

And Henry by, too, resumed Eleanor! What must he think of me that have no eyes, no ears, but for Mr. Sharp, during a whole evening.

I hope he pities you, said I; for you certainly deserve it.

I hope he does, returned Eleanor; but, after what you have told him, it is possible he may think I listen voluntarily to such superlative nonsense.

At that moment Mr. Sharp popped his head into the grotto, in search of us. He looked round, but, as we were seated in a recess, and obscured by a broad mossy pillar, he did not discover us. Henry looked in soon after, with the same view, and with the same success. He was retiring, when we came forward, and I said, Henry, you have scarcely spoken to us, during the whole of this rural fête.

You have been much better employed than in listening to me, replied Henry. At home my conversation may be acceptable: but I dare not presume to intrude here.

O, said Eleanor, if you did but know ; she stopped, seeing Mr. Sharp again at the entrance of the grotto.

If I did but know what? asked Henry, who had his back to the door: but, before she could answer, Mr. Sharp cried, So, I have found you at last! I have been hunting for you this half hour. I have been here before; and I have been into the house, and *ivery* where in the world; and I have asked Lady Winterdale, and my aunt, and nobody knew what was become of you. I suppose you hid yourself o' purpose to be found out. The two dances are almost finished, and it's our turn now. We shall have the very *charmingist* dance that *iver* we had in all our lives. Come, continued he, taking Eleanor's hand, we shall be too late. He then led his captive triumphantly into the ball room. I would have stopped Henry, but he was gone.

At the commencement of the next two dances Eleanor was without a partner, and, as her kind stars would have it, without Mr. Sharp; he being obliged to dance with one of the town Misses.

She was sitting alone, when Henry came to her, and asked her why she did not dance? She replied, she had no partner. He then asked if she would accept of him, rather than sit still? Her sweet face brightened up in a moment; and she gave him her hand, without speaking.

Now did Eleanor dance indeed. Her soul was in every movement, and she scarcely touched the ground. Surely pains were sent us to enhance our pleasures! Had the charming Eleanor not been doomed to undergo the mortifying persecutions of Mr. Sharp, she had not known the transport she now experienced in being the partner of Henry Winterdale. Henry is one of the finest dancers I ever saw; and they were the admiration of the whole company. But that was the least part of the satisfaction. It is the man, and not the manner of moving his legs and arms, that makes the partner.

The two dances ended, Eleanor sat down. Henry placed himself next her, on one side, and she gave a beseeching look to me, to take the other; thereby excluding Mr. Sharp. He came to claim her, instantly; but she told him, with firmness, she should dance no more that night. He argued, and persuaded, and teazed, and remonstrated; but Eleanor was immoveable; and I believe the universe could not have prevailed upon her to have danced again, except with Henry.

I shall not suffer two ladies to sit together, *howiver*, said Mr. Sharp. I am resolved to part you two.

You take a liberty that I durst not, Sir, said Henry.

O, rejoined Mr. Sharp, fortune favours the bold. Ladies do not like to sit together, *howiver,* they may make believe.

These ladies are an exception to that rule, said Henry: they do not like to be parted.

They may say so, said Mr. Sharp, but I know better.

We shall teach you better still, said I, putting my arm in that of Eleanor. Mr. Sharp then had recourse to, Now, do! Now, pray, do! Now, this once! but, finding all his eloquence thrown away, he left us, to teaze somebody else.

At parting Mrs. Elrington told my mother, she should have left her name at her gate, on her marriage, notwithstanding the law−suit, if she had thought it would have been agreeable to her and Mr. Winterdale.

I assure you, said my mother, it would be extremely agreeable to me to cultivate the acquaintance of such neighbours; but I cannot undertake to answer for Mr. Winterdale. You know his singularities, perhaps, better than myself. To restore him to society must be a work of time, and it will be attended with great unwillingness on his part; but I do not altogether despair of it: and if you do me the honour to make me a visit, you must allow me to return it by Miss Montgomery and Miss Mowbray, who ride on horseback; for, at present, I have no carriage; and, till Mr. Winterdale indulges me with one, it is as impossible for me to reach your house, as the dominions of the Great Mogul.

The Elringtons told my mother they should be proud of her acquaintance on her own terms.

After we had taken leave of the Vicarage, I know not how it was, but by some chance or other, I found my arm in Montgomery's; and, looking behind me, I perceived the same chance had happened to Henry and Eleanor. Mr. Sharp skipped about, and looked as if he had lost something; but, finding he could do no better, he offered his arm to Lady Winterdale.

I declare to you, my dear Harriet, that I neither thought the way long or rugged. On the contrary, I found the walk so very delightful; here, a broad mass of shade, from the venerable oaks; there, the silver moon, soft glimmering through the birches; and, bye and bye, the open expanse of a cloudless sky; that I regretted not the elegant chariot, which used to convey me home after a ball.

Dancing introduces a kind of familiarity that would be quite inadmissable in a drawing room. When a gentleman solicits the honour of your hand, it is not a figure of speech; your hand really belongs to him, for the time; and if he persists in taking it a little after the time, it would be very ill−natured to withdraw it unless one did not like him. For my part I found something so admirably persuasive in the touch of the hand of the man I do like, even through two pair of gloves, that I could not find in my heart to cut short its eloquence.

The village bell told three as we reached the hall. Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Sharp made their bows at the door*;* the one getting into a post chaise which waited to carry him to the town; the other walking back to the Parsonage.

Believe me, my dear Harriet,

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 37. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Aug. 15, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

Since I wrote last I have lost my lover, and Eleanor has gained one. Montgomery is gone to join the regiment at Newcastle. Our parting was more tender than I shall confide to you, lest my pensorosos should appear ridiculous; be content to know that he vowed unalterable love.

Stop, Charlotte, I hear you say, are you not already ridiculous? What, in this world, is unalterable? My dear, you cavil at words. I am sensible, as well as yourself, that every thing we know is perpetually changing; that every leaf and tree; every particle of earth; every stone, metal, and mineral; are continually varying in substance, or quality, or both; that the body of man is every moment increasing or diminishing in bulk, and softening or hardening in texture; and shall his mind alone be permanent? I am too much a philosopher to expect it.

Let the love of Montgomery change; let it increase as much as you please. When we may have been wedded some fifty years, let it even have changed its nature, and become like that of Darby and Joan. So he still love, and love me alone; I am content.

Before I see Montgomery again he will have made a personal attempt to reconcile his father to his exchanging his sword for a reaping hook, his spear for a ploughshare (if I quote the expression right, and if I do not, look into your Bible and correct me) and the colours of his King for mine. Awful matters, these, on which the happiness of my future life depends. He requested permission to write me an account of his good or ill success, which I granted without hesitation.

Some very prudent ladies might, perhaps, be startled at a young woman's entering into a correspondence with her lover. I hope you are not of the number. I know of no duty that forbids it; and I beseech decorum to pardon me, if I unwittingly sin against it. The days of entrapping unwary damsels, and either leading them into naughty houses, or forced marriages, are past; and I cannot help being of opinion that a woman may command respect from her lover, by pen and ink; or forfeit it, by improper conduct, though she be too scrupulous to write.

I would not be understood to reflect upon poor Clarissa Harlowe, whose behaviour would have secured her chastity against any man of mortal mould. Lovelace, a systematic, persevering, unfeeling, libertine, either was not of mortal mould, or the race is, happily, become extinct.

As I can never be out of my way, my dear Harriet, when writing to you, I will venture to say a few words on Richardson's Novels; a subject on which there have been many critics and many different opinions. They are a species of lengthened drama, of which he was the sole inventor. Life is brought before one in detail, and fictitious characters are made to speak and write with an air of reality. The present point of view is seldom particularly interesting; but the whole is irresistible.

Richardson must have written with ease. Perhaps his greatest difficulty, like that of an author of the present day, Mr. Pratt, might have been to reject and compress what was already written; and perhaps their works might have been still improved, if each had rejected more.

Richardson is styled by a contemporary novel writer, whose work I remember to have met with among some old books of my grandfather's, *The author of Clarissa Harlowe, whose patience nothing could equal, but that of his readers.* The critic and his work are alike forgotten; while succeeding generations will have the patience to read Clarissa Harlowe.

Lady Mary Wortley Montague appears to me to give the most just and natural account of Clarissa Harlowe that I have seen; but as I have not her letters, I may not do justice to it. The work was sent her, with other books, when she was residing abroad. She was struck with its novelty; she complained that the incidents were trifling, and that the manners of high life were not faithfully depicted. She went on. She found one character like herself; another like her father; another like what she had heard of her mother. At last, all faults forgotten, she burst into tears, and thus gave an unequivocal testimony in favour of the book.

What opinion Lady Mary entertained of Sir Charles Grandison I do not recollect. I only remember that she speaks of the behaviour of Charlotte Grandison, afterwards Lady G. in terms of just reprehension. I have always thought her flippancy and pertness to her Lord unpardonable; and I have sometimes thought that she was indebted for her wit to her arch look, which we are frequently told was called in to its aid.

Richardson's novels have produced an effect in the female world that their author probably never foresaw. Learning, before his time, was a serious thing; the woman who attained a share of it was esteemed a prodigy; and, without it, she could hardly dare to take a pen in hand. He shewed women that they might write without learning; that they might be pleasing and interesting authors, by the talents, alone, which God had given them. They left off making puddings and pies, on the discovery, and betook themselves to writing letters; and, from the days of Clarissa Harlowe and Anna Howe, to those of Charlotte Montgomery and Harriet Castlemain, the world has been inundated, and, doubtless, much improved, by female epistolary writing.

Speaking of Lady Mary Wortley induces me to mention Mrs. Vigor, whose Letters from Russia may be read with pleasure after the celebrated letters of that lady from Turkey. Mrs. Vigor's talents have not the strength of those of her fair predecessor in the diplomatique corps; but her wit and vivacity, when combined with her subjects, are sufficient to render her work extremely entertaining. It is not to be bought. Perhaps, while the public taste is indulged with daily novelties, it may not be worth the while of the literary cooks to serve an old dish up again; though composed of excellent ingredients.

One transgression leads to another, and one digression to another. By a very easy transition, my correspondence with Montgomery brought me to Clarissa Harlowe; Richardson to Lady Mary Wortley Montague; and her Ladyship to Mrs. Vigor. Here I ought to quit my devious path, and get into the right road; but I have an inclination to let my pen run away with me; and, now I am in company with female literati, to introduce you to another, instead of Miss Mowbray's lover; as I intended, when I began my letter: and you will the rather pardon me for deferring the pleasure you are to receive in his society, as you will probably have conjectured it to be Mr. Sharp.

The lady I mean is a humble poetess, unknown to fame, of the name of Mary Jones; who, with great diffidence, and at the request of friends, and for the support of an aged and infirm mother, published, in the year 1750, an octavo volume of verse and prose. By the date, you will observe she is not of the Richardsonian school; and, with deference be it spoken, she possesses an energy which some of Richardson's ladies do not. Her letters were written from 1732 to 1750.

That the friends who advised her to publish were in the right, and that the end for which she published was answered, their number sufficiently proves. Her subscribers amount to upwards of fifteen hundred, and are as remarkable for rank and talents as for number. Besides the Prince and Princess of Orange, and the Prince and Princess of Nassau Orange, the list contains seven Dukes and Duchesses; fifty−one Peers and Peeresses; fifty−six other titled personages; ten Members of Parliament; and Dignitaries of the Church, and Doctors of Divinity innumerable. Among those distinguished for mental qualifications are Lord Chesterfield; the Hon. George, afterwards Lord, Lyttleton; Horace Walpole, afterwards Lord Orford; Dr. Young; and David Garrick.

Such were the hands stretched forth to sanction the literary labours, and reward the filial piety of Mary Jones; and, if you dare trust so young a critic as myself, her productions do not disgrace her patrons. She possesses genius and depth of thought; with another talent, delivered out rather sparingly to authoresses humour. I think her letters

inferior only to those of Lady Mary Wortley, who, as I said before, stands at the head of the epistolary profession; and I think her poetry superior to the poetry of that lady. It is even, in many places, not unlike that of Pope; as an instance of which take the first four lines in her book:

How much of paper's spoil'd! what floods of ink!
And yet how few, how very few can think!
The knack of writing is an easy trade;
But to write well, require, at least a head.

Perhaps, I might go on, and transcribe the whole epistle, with some few exceptions; but I will rather skip from the first poem in her book to the last; which, as the chances are much against your ever having seen or heard of Mary Jones, I will give you entire. It is addressed to her friend, Lady Henry Beauclerk, formerly the Hon. Miss Lovelace, one of the Maids of Honour to Queen Caroline.

The summit reach'd of earthly joys,
Your nurs'ry full of girls and boys,
Your Lord in peace return'd;
Your rents improv'd, your lands increas'd,
The good old baroness deceas'd,
And with due honours mourn'd;

What more remains, but, safe ashore,
Grateful indulge the present hour,
And while you feel, impart;
Nor let a feebler pulse controul
One gen'rous purpose of your soul,
One virtue of your heart.

The ruling passion, bold, and strong,
May struggle in the bosom long,
Yet want its time to shoot;
But when kind heav'n the soil supplies
With bolder suns, and brighter skies,
It yields its gen'rous fruit.

Whether we view your morning scene,
A favour'd maid near Britain's queen
(The rest let envy tell)
Or now, arriv'd at noon of life,
A frugal mother and a wife,
Thus far, at least, was well.

And thus far, too, your praise I've sung;
And still the burden of my song
Was Ne'er be fortune's creature.
For though she open'd all her store,
And though she gave you ten times more,
To be YOURSELF IS greater.

The songs I sung you kindly took,
And bid me put them in a book,

Because I scorn'd to flatter;
But now more *great*, that is, more *rich*,
God knows what demons may bewitch,
And spoil your honest nature.

Should you grow artful, foolish, nice,
Or sink to sneaking avarice,
Much good may riches do ye!
But then, how simple I shall look?
Do, tear your songs, and burn your book,
And say I never knew ye.

I will now give you a page of prose, extracted from the last letter of Mary Jones to the same lady, on the subject of the publication of her works.

The thing I was mentioning to your Ladyship at the Lodge, and which you've often hinted to me, among the rest of my friends, I'm now coming towards a resolution of putting in execution; tho' 'tis with difficulty I'm beginning to bethink myself of that low affair of getting money. My scattered leaves, if I can possibly collect 'em, are, I fear, at length destin'd for the press (a fate, I'm sure, never design'd 'em by me) and my sole end and aim just as much gold as I can get for 'em: a thing I've wanted all my life, but never had sense enough to think it worth the pains some people take about it, till very lately. But as I've a vast quantity of friends pretty near as many as David Simple and as these are a treasure infinitely beyond guineas and half crowns; I assure your Ladyship I never had the least design upon their pockets till now. But having been at great expense of pen, ink, and paper, for their various amusement and entertainment, which they have all most kindly and cordially acknowledged in their several writings, I make no doubt of their uncommon zeal in forwarding the subscription, and generously receiving all the half−crowns that come; though as *gold* is my ruling passion at present, I should rather prefer the half−guineas. Indeed your general and most approv'd motive for printing is *Fame.* But I've been thinking about that article; and I find two things requisite towards the attainment of so substantial a good. First, that an author be able to *write*, which is a thing I don't pretend to; and next, that the book be *read*, which is the very thing I would not have mine be. Now, as 'twould be very nonsensical to expect, what I am not so unreasonable as to desire, and, I'm confident, can never deserve; I must e'en stick to my first mover, *Riches:* and, as to the other, if it comes why let it but 'twill be like Falstaff's honour, unlook'd for.

I have one request to make to you, my dear Harriet, in favour of Mary Jones that you will pardon her elisions, which have now an awkward appearance; though I believe they were more common, and better regarded in her day. When I begun to transcribe I had some thoughts of restoring some of her words to their proper size, as I have reduced many of her capital letters to the present standard; but I thought it would be taking a liberty she might not approve, if she happened to be hovering over my head.

And this leads me to claim your indulgence for myself, if I should be found to require it. I believe *elisions* is the proper term for those clippings of the current language of the realm, that Mary Jones has been guilty of; but of this I am not sure. For though I speak and write my native tongue with decent correctness, I am ignorant of grammar; as, though I know every flower of the garden, I am a stranger to botany. I like *things*; and am not very apt to blunder in my acquaintance with them; but I never could stay to be introduced to them by technical terms. If it excite your wonder that, with an education suitable to my rank, I should be unacquainted with the elements of speech, I can tell you how it happened. I was educated at home; and when my governess marshalled nouns and pronouns; verbs and adverbs; articles and particles; in terrible array before me; frightened at such a host of adversaries, I fairly ran away to my father; and besought him to save me from the combat. Sir George yielded to my intreaties; and the more readily, as, at eight years old, I spoke and wrote with nearly the same degree of correctness that I do now.

But to return to Mary Jones. Where is she now? and where are her works? silently stolen off this worldly stage together, and *No more to be heard of or seen*! Is it not melancholy that the woman who could write so well, and who had a conference with no less a man than the author of the Night Thoughts upon an affair that was to endure for ever, that is, the acquiring immortality by the publication of her book; should have sunk with it into total oblivion! A heavy damper, this, for the ardour of the numerous tribe of verse−writing, novel−writing, and letter−writing ladies, whose names appear in advertisements in the newspapers!

Of the many books printed, how few are sold! of these, how few are reprinted and, of these, how very few are written by women.

Which of us shall excel Mary Jones? Not you; or I; or Miss A; or Miss B; or Miss any letter, to the end of the alphabet. Yet I can truly say that I never heard her name mentioned in my life; that I never saw more than two copies of her book; and that I purchased one of them, from a country bookseller's catalogue, a handsome octavo volume, good condition, large paper, bound in calf, gilt and lettered, for two shillings!

When time scribblemania possesses any of us; when we are borne aloft, on the airy wings of imagination, to flights of poetry; or believe ourselves capable of mighty deeds, in the field of prose; let us Remember Mary Jones. Our odes, narratives, and epistles, disappear almost as soon as the plum puddings, and raised pies of our great grandmothers.

The only parts of this letter meditated by me, when I began to address you were the beginning and the end; the paragraph which informs you of the departure of Montgomery, and the assurance that I am,

Ever your's

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 38. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Aug. 22, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

On the day after Mrs. Thacker's grand fête, Mr. Sharp drank tea with us. He is so omnipotent in words that, with as narrow a range of them as ever man in his station possessed, he can create something out of nothing: judge, then, if he could want conversation after a ball. The company; the dresses; the dancing; underwent his criticisms; and every thing turned out to be the very best, or the very worst; the very *bootifullest*, or the very *shockingest*, that *iver* he saw in all his life. Still Mr. Sharp was ill at ease. He looked impatient, dissatisfied, apprehensive; and I saw his project in his restlessness.

Six times did Mr. Sharp observe that the evening was the very finest that *iver* he saw in all his life: nobody seconded him, or differed from him in opinion. Three times did he say it was a sin to stay in the house: nobody proposed going out. At last, Mr. Sharp asked Eleanor if she would *fetch* a walk.

Where shall I fetch it from? said Eleanor.

O, dear, cried Mr. Sharp, what a question! when there are so many charming walks in this fine old ancient park!

I did not know that I could bring any of them here, said Eleanor.

O, dear, no, to be sure, said Mr. Sharp, Who *iver* thought of any *sich* a thing? If I did not know you was uncommonly clever, I should think you was excessively silly.

You are really very smple, Eleanor, said my mother, with a good natured design that was wholly unnecessary, for Mr. Sharp had no idea he was ridiculed. Mr. Sharp is perfectly right in recommending a walk this fine evening. I am sure Charlotte and Henry can have no objection to it.

This was precisely what Mr. Sharp had an objection to; but he did not dare to name it; and we set out in quest of a walk.

Mr. Sharp endeavoured to persuade Eleanor that she would soon be weary if she did not take his arm. She declared she never had less need of an arm, and marched on sturdily, without it. Truth obliges me to confess, that if she made any objections to Henry's arm the night before, they were in a lower tone, and I did not hear them. But the difference might be in the hour; as every body knows that gentleness and softness are more in character with the modest, peeping moonbeams, than with the broad staring rays of the sun. Mr. Sharp then tried to convince Eleanor that she *was* weary; and pointed to different seats, as we passed them, very proper for weary persons; but finding all his rhetoric vain, at last he plainly told Henry and me that Miss Mowbray and himself had something to say, which they did not wish us to hear; and that, if we would walk on, they would soon overtake us.

Indeed, said Eleanor, I have nothing to say to Mr. Sharp that all the world may not hear, and was proceeding, when that gentleman snatched her hand; and Henry, putting my arm in his, without speaking, we struck off into a different path. Henry was silent during the rest of our walk. I endeavoured, once or twice, to be very entertaining; but, meeting with no encouragement, I was obliged to be silent too. We soon reached the hall, where Mr. Sharp and his fair partner arrived in about half an hour. At supper Henry looked gloomy; Eleanor uneasy; and Mr. Sharp talked less than usual.

When we retired to our dressing room we dismissed Robinson, and, seating ourselves at one of the windows, I threw up the sash and cried, Now, in the sight of *yonder blessed moon*, tell me what unimaginable things been said to Eleanor Mowbray, by Edmund Sharp.

The man has made downright love to me, answered she.

That I supposed, rejoined I; but how? in what manner? is the question. Besides, my dear, you speak of such a marvellous event with too little reverence. Try if you cannot put it into blank verse.

Put nonsense into blank verse! exclaimed Eleanor.

Not so unattainable as you imagine, said I. The thing has often been done. However, if that be not agreeable to you, give it me in your own way; only do be very circumstantial, for I like to lose nothing of a love tale.

Well, then, said Eleanor, at first I was very desirous to follow you; but Mr. Sharp intreated so earnestly that I would stay and hear him, that I thought it best to comply and have done with the subject.

You force me to chide you again,' interrupted I. Naughty cousin! You wish to have done with the subject; and I wish to hear a great deal. But go on.

Now, my dear Harriet, though I am pretty dextrous at giving you question and answer, when I am one of the parties, I do not exactly know how to give you a conversation I did not hear, except at second hand. I must even proceed in the usual way, as if I were present, only requesting you to remember, for the sake of matter of fact, that I was not.

Now I will lay you any money, said Mr. Sharp, that you don't know what I am going to say to you.

I do not pretend to know till I have heard it, replied Eleanor.

But, perhaps, returned he, you can give a *leetle* tiny bit of a guess.

I have not the smallest idea of it, said Eleanor.

Why, then, said Mr. Sharp, I will tell you the long and the short of it. You must know I did not mean to marry, for I have always found a bachelor's life very comfortable, and very pleasant. One goes to bed when one has a mind; and one gets up when one has a mind; and one sits down to breakfast, and makes the tea as strong as one has a mind; and one orders what one likes for dinner; and one either goes out, or stays at home, which one pleases; and one says *nothink* to nobody. I've seen pretty girls, to be sure, and they have simpered and smiled at me, as much as to say, *Ask and have*; like the pigs in Lubberland, that run about the streets, ready roasted, crying, *Come eat me*; but I would have none of *sich* trash; I've seen good bold girls, too, that when they come to be the wife of *sich* a man as me, would have said, *I shall do this Mr. Sharp;* and *you shall do that Mr. Sharp;* and *the tother shall be so and so, Mr. Sharp.* And I've seen *dillicut,* mincing misses, that, if I had had one of them would have said, *Now, my dear, dear, Mr. Sharp, you sha'n't go to sich a place, I shall be so frightened;* and *you sha'n't stay out late, I shall be so uneasy*; and so, one way or another, they would *niver* let a man be his own master. But, my dear Miss Mowbray, since I have been *acquineted* with you, all these thoughts are over. If I could but persuade you to have me, I should be the happiest of *hooman creters*. If you said you would have any *think* so, I should wish it to be so; and if you was *iver* so fond of me, I should *niver* think much of staying at home to oblige you.

Here Mr. Sharp stopped; but Eleanor continuing silent, he went on.

Now, my dear, sweet Miss Mowbray, said he, will you give consent?

If there was any chance of my accepting your offer, replied Eleanor, I could not answer now; I should hesitate; but, as there is not, I find no difficulty in answering at once. I am much obliged to you; but I must decline it.

Nay, now you are quite cruel, said the lover. Sure you cannot have the heart to deny me. What shall I say to persuade you?

Nothing, replied Eleanor. Unless the regard were mutual I am not to be persuaded.

Why, that is as much as to say you do not like me, rejoined Mr. Sharp. I'm sure you cannot go to say you do not like me. What have I done to deserve it?

I have no reason to dislike you, certainly, answered Eleanor, nor do I mean to say so; but as I feel none of that preference which might lead me to accept your proposal, and am very sure I never can feel it, I think it right to tell you so, without disguise.

But I will not take *sich* a denial, returned Mr. Sharp. I cannot see that there is any *think* so very objectionable about me, but that a young lady may love me if she will. I will do *ivery think* in the world to make myself agreeable. I'll be a true lover, and a kind husband. You shall *do whativer* you please, and go *wheriver* you like, and carry the purse: and what can man do more? You must be very *unsatisfied,* if this does not content you.

You offer more than enough, said Eleanor; but, without one thing, the rest are vain. I could not marry without love.

Why, do not I love? said Mr. Sharp. I assure you, I love you dearly.

Yes, replied Eleanor, but I candidly confess I do not love you; and the affection should be mutual.

Why, let it be *mootal*, then, said Mr. Sharp. What should hinder it?

It is easier to ask such a question than to answer it, said Eleanor. Say it is fancy, caprice, insensibility, absurdity; say, as was formerly said to Dr. Fell,

I do not like thee Doctor Fell.
The reason why, I cannot tell;
But I don't like thee Doctor Fell.

Ah! said Mr. Sharp, that will *niver* do. Do not I know that you are neither fantastical, *insensable*, nor absurd? Do not I know that you are the very *sensablest, reasonablest* young lady that *iver* I knew in all my life? except it might be Miss Montgomery; and I don't like her so well, because she is too much like myself she is too *Sharp*; and I don't like that horrid law suit. And, besides, what is Doctor Fell to me? I do not know him, nor *niver* heard talk of him. He might be some old parson, or physician, in a great wig; and then I'm sure no young lady could *iver* like him. My dear Miss Mowbray, I know you are joking. If you was *serus*, you would give some better reason than fancifulness and foolishness.

I assure you most solemnly, said Eleanor, quickening her pace, that, let my reasons be what they may, be they founded on reality or imagination, my mind cannot change on this subject, and you will oblige me by dropping it for ever.

Now I have once broke the ice, said Mr. Sharp, I can tell you that will be no *sich* easy matter. I am not used to courting, and I was rather at a loss how to begin; but I find it all comes very *natteral*. I am very much in love with you, and very fond of your company, and will do *ivery think* in the world to oblige you, and you must have a heart of stone, if all this does not melt it. Love will surely bring love, and I will wait your own time.

You will wait, said Eleanor, till time shall be no more.

You are very cross−grained tonight, rejoined the lover. I am very far from thinking as my aunt Thacker does, not but I have known several ladies think as much, that I am tall and genteel, and handsome, and rich, and good−*natered*, and a good singer, and a good dancer, and all that; but sure I am not so very *despiseable*, as for a young lady to come to go say, I may wait for her to all eternity, and perhaps she won't have me at last.

Indeed, said Eleanor, I would not have you wait for me one moment. I only wish to say, in the plainest and strongest terms I can devise, that if you did, it would be to no purpose.

We shall see that, said Mr. Sharp. Many things have happened more unlikely than a lady's changing her mind, even if that be your mind, at present. When you find me always agreeable to *ivery think* in the world, and *niver contradicting nothink* at all, I don't see how you can *pussevere* in *sich* ill−*nater*. I shall see a pretty, sweet, lovely smile upon your face, one day or other, and I'll take you while you are in the *homer*.

But why, said Eleanor to me, interrupting herself, why should I fatigue you with any more of Mr. Sharp's incorrigible folly! It is sufficient to say, that I could make use of no language to induce him to give up his pretensions, or even to doubt of their ultimate success. You will believe he could as little change my opinion of him, or my firm resolve to get rid of him, if I can. Is it not surprising, Charlotte, that a man should hope against all reason and probability?

It is not surprising that Mr. Sharp should, replied I; for he is not a judge of either.

Then let him hope, said Eleanor, till his intellects can discover that he has no cause. I am only sorry that an unoffending young woman, like myself, should be the object of his incessant persecution.

That might serve one to laugh at, said I, if Henry Winterdale were not by.

I own, said Eleanor, his presence makes it more grievous. I should detest myself were he to think me capable of listening to such a shallow self−sufficient babbler.

I wish Henry would put an end to his suspicions, if he entertains any, said I, by letting you hear what he can say on his own account.

Ah! Charlotte, said the sweet girl, her face covered with blushes, how can you think of that. If he had any particular interest respecting me, what should prevent him from declaring it? I am only desirous not to sink so low in his esteem, as any encouragement given to Mr. Sharp would make me.

My dear cousin, said I, by dint of a peculiar faculty I have, of diving into people's hearts, and seeing what passes there, I do believe that Henry takes a very particular interest in whatever concerns you; but there are several reasons which may prevent him from declaring it, at present. He has no establishment to offer you; his father may have other views for him; or he may he diffident of success. All men have not, like Mr. Sharp, the intrepidity to make a declaration of this kind, uncertain whether they have an advocate in your bosom; or, the determination, like him, to persevere, in spite of all assurances that they have not.

I have not hitherto dared to mention my opinion even to you, my dear Charlotte, said Eleanor; but I cannot help thinking that Mr. Winterdale designs you for his son.

I have had the same notion, replied I; but, as my consent would be requisite to his plan, it will certainly fall to the ground. I believe I might rest its demolition upon Henry; but I am sure I can upon myself. Henry has already asserted his independence, by going to the vicarage; and when I give up mine, said I, with a sigh, I hope it will not go out of my own family! I hope it will go either with, or to, the venerable old castle and domain, in which my ancestors maintained their's.

We then retired to rest.

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 39. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Aug. 29, 1812.

My dear Harriet,

Mr. Sharp has visited us daily since the declaration of his love for Eleanor. At her earnest supplication, I have taken care never to leave her alone with him a moment; thereby giving him another cause of dislike to myself, besides my law−suit, and what he terms, my *sharpness*, which last, I hope, has never exceeded the *retort courteous*. By way of making himself all the amends in his power, if I walk on one side of Eleanor, he plants himself on the other; if I take my chair next her's, he does the same. To render our system of defence complete, I

tell her we should have Henry for an auxiliary. Henry, however, instead of lending us his aid, keeps aloof. All attention, and brotherly kindness, when we are alone; when Mr. Sharp enters, he does not formally and officially resign his place, but, he contrives soon to leave an opening, which the other never fails to avail himself of. Henry then is occupied by something else; he reads, without knowing what book is in his hand; he looks attentively through the window, without seeing any object; or he walks out, without perceiving whither he is going. In the meantime, Mr. Sharp, wholly at his ease, and having gained his point (except in getting rid of me, whom he would willingly consign to the antipodes) entertains Eleanor with a profusion of words resembling sounding brass, or the tinkling cymbal.

A few mornings ago Eleanor and I sat down to our work table, Henry seated himself between us, my mother took up a newspaper, and Mr. Winterdale was employed in settling some accounts; when Eleanor, opening her work box, found a beautiful needle−book, of silver fillagree. It contained a thimble of gold, a pair of scissors of the finest steel, and other trifles, of which the materials were good, and the workmanship exquisite. Every one was eager to examine it, and all were lavish in their encomiums but how came it there? nobody knew. I looked at Henry with enquiring eyes: his eyes testified his ignorance. Robinson was summoned. She knew nothing of it.

A fool and his money are soon parted, said Mr. Winterdale, and Sharp is the greatest fool I know.

At that instant Mr. Sharp entered the room.

Mr. Sharp, said my mother, you are come in time to help us to guess how this elegant little needle−book came here. For my part, I believe the house is haunted by some invisible fairy prince, who is trying to recommend himself to Eleanor; and I expect he will take off his red cap, bye and bye, and shew himself in his proper shape.

I will take no presents from goblins, said Eleanor.

O, dear, said Mr. Sharp, I'm sure you may venture to take it. I dare say it was put there by flesh and blood. I have no notion of *hopgoblins,* and apparitions, and those things; not I; though I must confess I should be frightened to death if I was to see any of them, particularly an invisible prince. But do you really like the needle−book, Miss Mowbray?

It is the most beautiful little thing I ever saw, replied Eleanor.

I am very happy to hear you say so, replied Mr. Sharp that is, I am always happy when you are pleased; and I must own that I do think it the very prettiest, *elegantest* thing that *iver* I saw in all my life.

Take care, Mr. Sharp, said my mother: you are pulling off the red cap.

Ma'am? said Mr. Sharp I beg your ladyship's pardon; but, indeed, upon my word, I do not understand you.

You will turn out to be the invisible prince, yourself, I believe, said my mother.

O dear, O dear, said Mr. Sharp, I cannot imagine how your ladyship could *iver* go to think of *sich* a thing! I an invisible prince! If I was invisible, how could your ladyship see me here, cutting this bit of paper, with these scissors? and, as to a prince, I will venture to say that I am no more like a prince than I am like an old washer−woman.

It does not signify equivocating, Sharp, said Mr. Winterdale; you may be snipping paper, like a child in the nursery, or you may chatter like a washer woman over the suds; but Miss Mowbray positively declares she will not keep the needle−book, unless you put it in the work box.

O, dear, said Mr. Sharp, what shall I do! I'm sure you are most shockingly hard upon me. I did not mean to tell; but, if I must, I must. If *nothink* else can prevail upon Miss Mowbray to keep it, I must own, and confess, and acknowledge, that I did put it there. But the work box was open; I did not once touch the lid. I got the needle book from London o' purpose for Miss Mowbray. I am prodigiously happy she likes it; and I hope she will do me the honour, to grant me the favour of *excepting* of it.

Pardon me, said Eleanor, indeed I cannot.

O, but you must, returned Mr. Sharp. it's good for *nothink* to nobody else. Don't you see your cypher, E. M. upon *ivery think* ? It cannot belong to any other lady; and we gentlemen are out of the question; because we *niver* use *sich* things.

Such a thing might be useful to yourself, said Mr. Winterdale, if you cannot prevail upon the lady to take it. I would bet sixpence you can darn a hole in your stocking, as well as your laundress.

Mr. Sharp involuntarily cast his eyes over his black silk stockings, to see if there was any darn, which might give evidence against him; then, turning to Mr. Winterdale, said Pray, Sir, may I take the liberty to be so bold, as to ask what makes you think so?

I think those long, slender fingers, and that delicate white hand of your's, smell of the needle.

O, dear, Sir, said Mr. Sharp, laughing and displaying his hand, is that all? I'm sure I am very much obliged to you, for the compliment.

And not without reason said I; for Mr. Winterdale does not scatter his compliments at random. Whenever he bestows one upon me, I lock it up in my cabinet, and rise two inches higher in my own imagination, for having such a prize in my possession.

Mr. Winterdale is an exceeding good gentleman, indeed, when he pleases, and very diverting, said Mr. Sharp. It always gives me the greatest pleasure upon earth to see him smile.

I'll tell you how you may make me smile, said Mr. Winterdale.

Pray do, Sir, returned Mr. Sharp; I shall be excessively *obligated* to you, and am extremely happy to *contribit* t your *amoosmient*.

You contribute to my amusement every time I see you, said Mr. Winterdale; but I fancy it would be particularly entertaining to see you hold the plough.

Sir! exclaimed Mr. Sharp.

Will you oblige mc by ploughing two or three furrows in that field, yonder, where the men are at work; and the ladies and I will accompany you, and witness your execution?

My execution, indeed,Sir! for I verily believe and think I should suffer as little to be turned off at the *gallus*, as to come to try to hold the plough, up and down that field. Besides, Sir, if is beneath a gentleman: the ladies would *niver* like me again, after it.

The Emperor of China holds the plough every year, to let his subjects see that agriculture is not beneath their sovereign, said Henry.

Emperors may do any *think*, said Mr. Sharp; and I do not suppose those Emperors of the Blacks are so good as an English gentleman. I am sure you would be ashamed to hold the plough, yourself.

Not at all, replied Henry. I have frequently done it, for a short time, and can plough as well as any of the hinds.

Then you are a downright clodhopper, said Mr. Sharp.

Clod−hopping is a profession that I have only followed occasionally: I was not regularly bred to it, replied Henry.

Well! I could *niver* have believed you could have done *sich a* thing at all, rejoined Mr. Sharp. To be sure you are a gentleman, and a very genteel gentleman; but if I was to go to try to do *sich* a thing, I should be sick; and my arms would drop off my shoulders; and my shoes and stockings would be plaistered with dirt.

If you are afraid of dirt, said Mr. Winterdale, I could recommend another diversion. I have a very clean barn, and you may thrash.

You have a very singular taste, in your amusements, Mr. Winterdale, said my mother.

Very singular, indeed, said Mr. Sharp. Pray, Mr. Henry, do you ever thrash?

I have swung the flail, when I was a boy, answered Henry.

And did not you find it shocking hard work, demanded Mr. Sharp.

It is certainly hard work, replied Henry; but I did not find it shocking.

Well, I'm sure, I should be shocked to death at it, said Mr. Sharp.

You must excuse me, Sir, to Mr. Winterdale, I would do any *think* upon earth to obey your commands, and accommodate myself to your wishes; but, really, Sir, you set *sich rumbustical* tasks, that no gentleman, *whativer,* could have strength or spirits to go through them.

Then sit here, and thread the ladies' needles, said Mr. Winterdale.

That I will undertake with all the pleasure in the world, said Mr. Sharp. Come, Miss Mowbray, added he, pulling the thread out of her needle, give me your's, and let me try.

Thou wert a good housewife spoiled, when nature made thee a man, said Mr. Winterdale.

Eleanor then attempted to return the needle book to Mr. Sharp. He put his hands behind him. To argue with him would have been vain; and she placed it before him on the table. I'll not touch it, said he. After it has been in your possession it would burn my fingers: nay, I believe it would eat a hole through my *wescoat,* and set fire to my heart.

Sir, said Eleanor, very gravely, I cannot take your offered present. It is your's: do with it as you please.

There it shall lie till doomsday, for me, said Mr. Sharp; for I'm sure I could *niver* bear the sight of it.

My dear Eleanor, said my mother; you treat such a trifle too seriously. I am sorry Mr. Sharp's gallantry meets with such a mortifying reception. There, continued she, taking up the needle book, and putting it into Eleanor's work box, I am sure you cannot refuse it now.

Eleanor slightly bowed, and said nothing; Mr. Sharp triumphed; and Henry left the room.

You will observe, my dear Harriet, that Mr. Winterdale converses familiarly with Mr. Sharp. This is one move in favour of my mother. It is true he only ridicules him, and that not in a very delicate manner; but, to converse at all is great condescension; and, having made his first essay in coarse irony, and gratified his sarcastic humour, it may lead to a different kind of conversation, with different persons.

Believe me, my dear Harriet,

Ever your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 40. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Sept. 5, 1812

Your approbation of my flying criticisms upon books, gives me great pleasure, and emboldens me to renew the subject. They cost me nothing; for I must read; and nothing is more easy than to tell you my opinion of what I have been reading.

I am now deep in novels. If you ask leave to be witty, and observe that I am deep in shallow water, I answer, No. My authors are the ingenious Miss Edgworth, the grave Mrs. Hannah More, and the philosophical Holcroft.

The idea of Miss Edgworth's Castle Rackrent is original. In making an old servant relate the history of the family in which he has spent his days, she gives a finished picture of the manners of the Irish, from the peasant to his lord. The character of the old steward himself is well conceived, and well preserved; Half honest, half a rogue; much attached to his own interest, a little to that of his masters, and the panegyrist equally of their vices and their virtues. All is interesting, because all is natural.

Castle Rackrent determined me to read every thing of Miss Edgworth's that I could find. I could, however, only find Leonora.

The moral purpose of Leonora is to persuade woman to attend to her duties, rather than her rights. In a word, to counteract Mary Wollstonecroft. The undertaking is laudable, and we owe Miss Edgworth our thanks; for we shall certainly gain more by practising the one than asserting the other: but to conduct her principal character with propriety and probability was not an easy task. She is represented as possessing great beauty, talents, and spirit; capable of the most violent, uncontrollable love; yet, at the same time, unfeeling, tyrannical, and selfish; a coquet, not a philosopher.

This heroine of Maria Edgworth, who loves to desperation, and cares for nobody but herself, undertakes the delicate task of seducing the husband of her best friend. No part of Mary Wollstonecroft's system this: for she invaded the rights of no other woman. To make such a heroine steal upon the affections of a sensible, worthy man, attached to an amiable wife, required nice touches, and many of them. The thing was possible; and, with sorrow I say it, not very unlikely; but it must have been brought about by imperceptible gradations; perhaps more than are described; for if a heroine did not startle at it, an honest man certainly would, at first. Whether the

husband's going such lengths as to desert a wife whom he acknowledged had not a fault and to take her friend under his protection, be probable, I know not. I can only say that if it be, I should fear to marry Montgomery, because he was of the same species.

The wife is an angel if angels marry; and a pattern for wives if wives are to bear every thing, and say nothing. For my part, I have so much of the dross of humanity in my composition, that I should plainly have told my husband of my extreme affection for him, and my insupportable agony at seeing another rob me of his; and I should have dismissed the heroine from my house before matters had come to the worst. However, Leonora's way, aided by a good bit of sickness on his side, and good nursing on her's, reclaimed the rover; and that was enough.

The English General, and the French Gabrielle, the friends and correspondents of the two sinners, are characteristic and well drawn.

I have heard Clebs called the best novel in the English language. Mrs. Hannah More says The novel reader will reject it as dull, and accuse it of excessive strictness. In this point I have not the presumption to differ from the learned authoress. Wicked novel reader as I am, I confess that, in some of her long arguments, I turned over six leaves, instead of one! The work is so *parsonic;* so *prelatic*; that it requires no small portion of filial piety towards Mother Church, to be sensible of all its merit; as it requires no small degree of loyalty to conceive our excellent sovereign had no other fault than that of being born in June; meaning, thereby, that the celebration of his birthday kept the fashionable world, too long out of the country.

Hannah More contrasts the opinion of the novel reader with that of the religious reader, and proceeds to say, that The latter will throw her work aside as frivolous, and accuse it of censurable levity. In this particular I do venture to differ from her. I have had very little acquaintance with those christians she calls high professors ; but the little I have seen of them confirms me in the opinion that they will not like a godly book the worse for being amusing. As works of entertainment are interdicted by their creed, and supposed to belong to the Prince of Darkness, they will rejoice to find one on their side of the question. Clebs will be taken from the shelf with the Pilgrim's Progress, and the religious Courtship, and read with avidity by all young professors and not a few of the old.

Hannah More's ideas of female education are excellent; and it is to be presumed she teaches what she recommends; but when they are so often inforced; and it is, at the same time, remembered that she keeps a ladies' boarding school; it reminds one of a hand−writing against the wall, that one has frequently seen, in large letters, in a country town, Children taught here.

The style of Clebs is very fine; but it is artificial.

It is so long since I read the Hugh Trevor of Holcroft, that I shall not trouble you with any particulars on that subject. The general impression which remains on my mind is admiration, without alloy.

Anna St. Ives is written, as the author, himself, declares, to inculcate the lesson of fortitude to females. I admire her fortitude; but I think her rather too philosophical, for a young lady. The father is natural and well drawn. The shrewd, purse−proud, fawning, arrogant steward is well imagined and well supported; though his orthography is not fitted to his station; or, indeed, to any station; for no manager of a considerable estate could be so ignorant, and no ignorance could be so uniform.

The lesson taught by Bryan Perdue is excellent, and openly avowed That human life is too lightly disposed of by our laws; that the guilty are often capable of reformation, generally of utility; and that they should be improved and employed, rather than exterminated.

In the first volume the author keeps back his story, and is, what he calls, sportive. If his language were less dignified, I should call it flippant. No man should ever have taken the liberty to sport with his readers, but Sterne; whom, probably, Holcroft had in view; and who trifles so gracefully that the affront is forgotten. In the second and third volumes of Bryan Perdue the narrative becomes more rapid, and very interesting. It is a second George Barnwell, without being an imitation of the first.

Holcroft's characters are not wholly angelic or diabolical. They are human; and, therefore, a mixture of good and evil.

In his style Holcroft is what the painters call a mannerist. We have each a mode of expression peculiar to ourselves; as we have each a different tone of voice, and a different gait in walking. Reading, and good company may improve one of these; the music master another, and the dancing master the third; but they cannot be varied beyond a certain pitch, without affectation, which is detestable. Let an author then be known by his style; but Holcroft's style does not vary sufficiently with his subject and his characters. He is always philosophical; and that is being too much so.

Thus, my dear Harriet, have I dispatched religion and philosophy, Hannah More and Holcroft. Have I, then, neither religion or philosophy myself? I hope a little of both; but they are of a very simple kind. The one requires me to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God ; the other bids me be content with a world I cannot mend.

You have now another sheet of my humble criticisms upon novels. If you should take a fancy to substitute the word *saucy,* for *humble,* I will not dispute with you upon terms. But, though I have decided in the absolute tone of a Kotzebue, to save time and ink, I beg you to insert, *In my opinion, It appears to me,* or any other such like diminutives, as often as you may think it necessary.

After all, my dear Harriet, it is a mortifying reflection, that an author, when he publishes a book, constitutes every creature that reads it his judge; and that even an insignificant girl, like myself shall be intitled to decide upon the merits of such literary giants as Holcroft, and Hannah More!

I allow you to doubt any of my assertions, except that

I am truly your's,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 41. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Sept. 12,1812.

I had a letter from Montgomery, dated Newcastle, which, though very acceptable to myself, contained nothing necessary for you to know; and I have another, written from his father's which shocks my feelings: but I kiss the rod; being well aware that I have deserved to smart under it.

Montgomery finds Sir James inexorable. He regards my mother as an artful, designing woman, who has drawn Mr. Winterdale in, to pay her debts: and me as the worthy daughter of such a parent, supplying extravagance by desperate resources. There is too much truth in these charges for them to be repelled by me; and I cannot wonder that Sir James Montgomery, believing himself the rightful owner of the estate, and that he shall shortly have it in his possession, should disclaim an alliance with so unworthy a part of his family.

But, my dear Harriet, tell me; for my own judgment cannot clearly decide the question; am I really an abandoned young woman., a disgrace to an honourable family? or is my fault that of an inexperienced, giddy, girl, which may be expiated by time, and better conduct?

Montgomery makes no apology for disclosing to me the obstinate prejudices of his father. His heart, he says, dictates the communication of every circumstance, an every thought; and nothing shall it ever hide from me. Hs letter breathes the tenderest affection; and assures me of the countenance and support of his mother; who, I suppose, is of a softer mould than the nabob, her husband. Finally, he implores me to allow him to come hither, the moment his family have set out, on a tour they are going to make; and conduct me to Scotland, there to be indissolubly united to him. That ceremony irrevocably past, he says; my own merit cannot fail of being duly appreciated; and my mind and manners must claim the respect that one false step, magnified by malice and loquacity had forfeited.

My resolution remains unshaken. No, Montgomery, I will not be your's clandestinely. I will not again degrade myself by an action that shall require concealment. Stay till the laws of my country allow me to be a competent judge of my own conduct; and I will be your's, in the face of God and man, and brave all consequences.

The Elringtons have called upon us, and were admitted; Henry, Eleanor, and I returned their visit; and, yesterday the whole family dined with us, by invitation. I begin to discriminate their characters.

Mr. Elrington is a tall, large, well−looking man; his features are broad and capacious; and his complexion is of a hue between purple and crimson. He is what is called an excellent companion, and a clever fellow. He will hunt, in a morning, and be in at the death; shoot, and load his man with game; ride to the next town for news, and bring it to his village before the post. At dinner he will take as much wine as any man, and carry it as steadily. In the evening he will play a good rubber at whist; tell a good story; sing a good song; make a great noise, and be what is called the fiddle of the company. His voice is strong; he laughs much; and generally smiles when he speaks except when he speaks to his wife.

Mrs. Elrington is an interesting woman; pale, very thin; with a good understanding, a mild disposition, and a weak, though musical voice. Her soul seems all harmony, and her manners all softness. It is understood that Mr. Elrington's estate was deeply mortgaged when he married this lady, and that her large fortune retrieved his affairs. What has she in return for such winning qualities, and such substantial aid? It may be love at the bottom; but it is like the countryman's dirty road a terrible long way to the bottom. The best of what is apparent, is neglect; the rest, contradiction and a superciliousness, bordering upon contempt.

The Misses Elrington I will introduce to you together; for I know not how to separate them. If one begin to tell you a story, the other takes it up immediately, and relates it at the same time, and almost in the same words, to her neighbour. If you sit between them you are miserable; for they both, at once, tell it to yourself. They are reading ladies; and as ready in giving their joint opinions of books, as men; and they are chemical and botanical ladies; speaking fluently on oxygen, hydrogen, and gas; anthera, pistillum, and pericarpium. Add to all this an hereditary contempt for Mrs. Elrington, not openly expressed, like that of their father, but sufficiently obvious, and you have the outline of these young ladies.

Mr. Francis Elrington is of a better nature, and partakes largely of the mildness and moderation of his mother.

You may imagine we had not this family visit without much confusion at the old hall. Mr. Winterdale flew in a passion on the first intimation of it; and repeated the upbraidings you have heard before; but as he could neither move his lady's temper, nor her purpose, he was obliged to give up the point. He would not see our guests, however, but rode over to the town and took a mutton chop, and three or four glasses of red port, with his worthy solicitor, Mr. Foreclose; and uncharitable though you may have thought me, 1 have no doubt that the Elringtons suffered more in their description than they have done in mine. Henry Winterdale, though he had no

communication with them before, took his father's place, and did the honours of the house with a dignity and grace all his own.

Mrs. Thacker was of the party, and took no small pride in letting the Elringtons see the familiar footing she was upon with Lady Winterdale. *Your Ladyship and me* was the burthen of her song; and all that *I* had said to *her Ladyship,* and all that *her Ladyship* had said to *me,* from the very beginning of the acquaintance, was recited, with marks of peculiar satisfaction.

Mr. Sharp was here, of course; and took no less pains to shew his claim, to Eleanor, than Mrs. Thacker did her's to my mother. The sweet girl silently discouraged his overwhelming nonsense; but suffered no uneasy look to intrude upon the company. Henry was obliged to listen to the eloquence of the two sisters; but he involuntarily sent his eyes in pursuit of my lovely cousin and her tormentor; and a half suppressed sigh was sometimes the result of his observations.

As to Mr. Francis Elrington, I can make nothing of him. Just for want of some other object, I endeavoured to attract his notice; but, to my extreme humiliation, I found his eyes, too, were wandering towards Eleanor. I must either part with her, or give up universal dominion, that is certain: but female friendship, as you have long experienced, is a weighty consideration with

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 42. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Aberystwith, Sept. 19, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

Your receiving a letter from this place cannot be more unexpected by you than my being here was, eight days ago, by myself; and I believe you will have to travel over the two sheets of paper which now lie under my pen, before you will have accompanied me to the end of my journey.

After I had sealed my last, as our whole family was assembled in the eating room, after dinner, we saw a very elegant coach driving along the park, and making towards the house. My mother looked delighted; Mr. Winterdale alarmed; Henry inquisitive, and Eleanor and I astonished. For my part, I thought of Sir James Montgomery, and felt as if I were going to be called to the bar, to answer for my past offences. As the carriage approached, we perceived the blinds were drawn up; and, I believe the truth flashed upon every mind at the same moment. Mr. Winterdale bounced from the window, as if a musquet had been aimed at him, from the coach−box, exclaiming, This cannot be your doing, Lady Winterdale?

Indeed it is. replied my mother; who never wastes any words, at the first onset.

It is not possible, rejoined her husband, that you could have had the impudence to order a carriage and buy horses, without my knowledge?

It is not only possible, but certain; that I have done it, said my mother; though that low−bred creature, impudence, had no concern in the matter.

Impudence! repeated Mr. Winterdale. Nothing but the impudence of a highwayman, and a pickpocket could have done it.

I have no acquaintance with that sort of people, said my mother: the deed is all my own.

Buy a carriage and horses without asking my consent! cried Mr. Winterdale. Daring and unfeeling as you are, I cannot believe it.

You may be assured it is a fact, said my mother; and the only reason why I did not ask your consent was, that I knew I should not obtain it.

Base, ungrateful woman! returned Mr. Winterdale. You shall find it necessary still; and he rang the bell with violence. Mendall, said he, when the man entered the room, tell that rascal to drive his horses and carriage back again instantly. They shall not enter my gates.

Sir, replied Mendall, the carriage is in the stable yard, and the horses are going into the stable.

Mendall, said my mother, before Mr. Winterdale had time to speak, your master has no objection to the horses having a feed of corn You may go.

Mendall seemed glad of the permission, and left the room.

Lady Winterdale, said her husband, it is to no purpose that you think to make a fool of me, as you have done; for, by G , they shall not stay here.

Mr. Winterdale, replied my mother, raising her voice, for the first time, since her marriage, you presume upon my affection for you, and my peaceable temper, to provoke me beyond sufferance. You have thwarted me in every wish of my heart, since I have been your's, and I have taken your ill−humour and ill−manners patiently; but beware how you drive me too far. I have the spirit of a lion when it is rouzed, and I beg you to let it sleep in quiet. I *will* have the carriage. The coachman has my orders to remain here with it; and let me see who dares to move him.

Mr. Winterdale seemed thunderstruck. At length he said, give me leave to ask you one question, Madam, without rouzing the wild beast you threaten to let loose upon me. Did you, or did you not, make it one of the conditions of your becoming my wife, that you should do without a carriage?

I did, replied my mother; but let me ask you half a dozen questions. Have not I tried all in my power to do without a carriage? and do not I find it impossible? Have not I stayed at home till I have almost taken root in your old floors? Did not I run a risque of being buried in mud, when I went to the Vicarage? and have not I been obliged to send Charlotte and Eleanor to Mrs. Elrington's, because I could not traipse four miles on foot, and clamber over hedges and ditches, gates and stiles?

I will answer all these questions with a couple. Is not this park spacious enough to prevent your growing to old floors? and what necessity was there to go to Thacker's or Elrington's at all?

What necessity! repeated my mother. The common usages of the world, to be sure. Do you think people marry to be stationed in a park, like an oak tree? Do you think I shall be content to vegetate within the circle of your high stone wall? Do you think Miss Montgomery and Miss Mowbray will each pay two hundred pounds a year for her board, and not have the use of a carriage? My dear, continued my mother, addressing herself to Eleanor, who was going to speak, I know you never said any thing to me about it; but I am too good a judge of propriety not to own it is your due; and Mr. Winterdale will be of the same opinion, when he comes to reflect.

Reflection can only confirm me in the assurance that it is contrary to your promises, and to my habits and expectations.

All that may be. Your habits and expectations were wrong; essentially wrong; and my promises, it seems, were built on no better a foundation; for you see it is not in human nature that I should keep them.

Perhaps it is not in human nature to prevent your running out my fortune as you have done your own.

Why, yes, I believe it is. The experience I have had of creditors and duns makes me a little afraid; and I hope, for the future, I shall keep within bounds. But, Mr. Winterdale, sum up my offences. The wife of a man of good family, and six or seven thousand a year estate, with a stupendous hoard of ready money, insists upon keeping a carriage, and one, poor, pair of horses; and visiting her neighbours! For these mighty transgressions you have been chiding me, nay, abusing me, with language becoming your own blacksmith, ever since I have been your wife.

Your Ladyship forgets one thing in summing up your offences; the deceit you practised, to draw me in to be your husband; and the large sums I have paid, and have yet to pay for that honour.

Pardon me, I do not forget it; but I am afraid it is not quite justifiable, and so I did not bring it into the account against myself. But, Mr. Winterdale, I have heard enough of it from you, as well as of every other fault, that is, every other action of my life, since you favoured me with the empty title of Mistress of your impregnable castle, while you meant to keep the post of sole master of it yourself. All this I have borne with an invincible sweetness of temper.

Insensibility, you mean.

If insensibility has been my failing, you shall find it so no longer. I will now freely talk of *your* faults: I will tell you what *you* are; and what reformation I expect from the man I am to pass my days with.

We were all frightened, Mr. Winterdale among the rest.

With a fortune, continued my mother, on which society has a hundred claims; which ought to have procured you, the respect of your equals, and the blessings of your inferiors, you are despised by the one, feared by the other, and shunned and detested by all. Your very servants would seek a better master, if Mendall had not acquired an influence over you, which shields them from your tyranny and suspicion. With an understanding capable of directing your own conduct, you not only submit to his management, which he turns to your honour and advantage; but to that of a despicable, petty−fogging attorney, who encourages you in litigation with your neighbours, and picks your pocket of more money than would gain you a good name among them, if properly disposed of.

And now, Mr. Winterdale, as I have told you what you *have* done, I will tell you what you *shall* do. You shall stop all proceedings against Mr. Elrington, for the trespass; you shall take all your affairs out of the hands of Mr. Foreclose, and employ some more reputable agent: you shall live in amity and social intercourse with your neighbours, and in confidence and kindness with your servants: you shall keep the carriage, and horses, and coachman, which have led to this fortunate explanation; and we will all go to Brighton, for a month, and forget past grievances.

I go to Brighton! said Mr. Winterdale, with a piteous face, and a dismal groan. I go across the kingdom, to that sink of dissipation and extravagance! surely you cannot be serious!

I am very serious in my determination to use my carriage, now I have it: and in insisting upon the company and protection of my husband, said my mother; but if you have any particular objection to Brighton, name some other place.

If we must go, said Mr. Winterdale, I should think Aberystwith better, as it is nearer, and less expensive.

Aberystwith let it be, then, replied my mother, softening her voice. All places are alike to me, with the pleasure of your company; but, my dear Mr. Winterdale, some watering place is necessary for your first entrance into the world; and you will find it easier to shake hands with strangers on a parade, than to receive your neighbours at your own house, or visit them at their's.

Good God! cried Mr. Winterdale, am I to shake hands with Elrington? and even with that scoundrel Thacker? What will the world say? That I am under petticoat government, at least!

The world is a many−headed monster that nothing can satisfy, replied my mother; and its hissings and barkings are not worth a thought. But it will say, 'Mr. Winterdale has reflected on his past conduct; and amended it:' or, if it say, 'his wife spoke reason, and he had the good sense to listen to her,' where is the harm of it?

Reason and you, together, are too much for any common man, I am sure, said Mr. Winterdale But tell me, am I to visit Elrington and Thacker?

Mr. Elrington, certainly, answered my mother, and every other gentleman within the distance of a dozen miles. I shall desire Mr. Elrington to make them all understand that their visits will be acceptable to you. As to Mr. Thacker, he has treated you very ill, and I give him up to your discretion. I have no interest in his reformation.

That is some comfort, however, said Mr. Winterdale. But am I to keep that coxcomb of a coachman, with thirteen capes to his driving coat?

By no means, unless you like him, answered his lady. Heaven forbid, that I should dictate to you in the choice of your servants. You can let Mendall pay him for his journey, and send him back; and engage one you like in his place: only remember the season is far advanced, and we set off for Aberystwith next Wednesday.

Next Wednesday? repeated Mr. Winterdale. Impossible!

Nothing more easy, rejoined his lady. If giving orders and making preparations are any amusement to you; with your method and dispatch, you will find more than time enough: if you do not choose the trouble, everything will be ready, and you will have nothing to do, but step into the carriage. And now, Mr. Winterdale, continued she, holding out her hand, which he took, though not very cordially, I expect a great deal of love and gratitude. Some naughty wives would have been glad to escape from their husbands; but the summit of my wishes is to take my husband with me.

Sir, said Henry; no pleasure can equal mine at this moment. To see my father taste the true enjoyment of life; to love and be beloved by all around him, is more than I durst hope for. His voice changed, and he turned away to hide the starting tear.

Eleanor and I each took a hand. My dear Mr. Winterdale, how happy you make us! and may you, said one, and you must, said the other, be happy, yourself!

The poor gentleman could scarcely articulate, Perhaps I have been to blame, as well as Lady Winterdale.

We then drew our chairs close together, and began to arrange the preliminaries of our intended journey.

My mother moved, that Mr. Winterdale and herself, Charlotte and Eleanor, do go in the coach; Mendall in the servant's seat, behind; Horton, Robinson, and part of the baggage in a post chaise; Henry on horseback, attended by Ralph; and our coachman, that is to be, go forward with his own horses.

Eleanor proposed as an amendment, that Robinson remain at home, and she and I assist one another.

Mr. Winterdale proposed as a further amendment, that Mendall stay at home, to superintend matters there; that the coachman officiate as groom and Ralph as footman.

After an observation from my mother that Ralph was so clumsy and awkward she should be ashamed of him, and a reply from her husband that he would do very well for Wales; the amendments were carried, without one dissenting voice; and we separated to prepare for our excursion.

Thus has my mother, by the help of caustics, judiciously mixed with emollients, effectually cured Mr. Winterdale of obstinacy and self will, avarice and litigation; at least, of all the outward and visible signs of these vices. The man whose habits were so inveterate, that I declared, before her marriage, I should not dare to encounter the smallest of them, has laid them all at her feet; and is to assume a set of opposite ones, at her bidding. But let no woman attempt such a conquest, if she have any of that foolish thing called love about her; for, instead of new modelling her husband's heart, she will wring her own.

When we met again, my mother informed Mr. Winterdale that a servant had been from the Elrington's, with an invitation for us all to dine there on Monday; and that she had accepted it in his name, as well as the rest.

How could you do so? demanded Mr. Winterdale, with terror in his countenance. I cannot go to Elrington's yet. You owned, yourself, that the accidental society of a watering−place was the best to begin with.

I own it still, replied her ladyship; but, as this invitation has happened, and you owe Mr. Elrington something for coming here, I think it will be a very handsome thing for you to withdraw your action against him immediately, and go and tell him of it yourself.

Mendall is gone to Foreclose now,' said Mr. Winterdale, with a written order to that effect; and to desire him to give up all his papers and accounts, and send in his bill.

O, Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, you surpass my utmost expectations. If you can do this, all the rest will be easy.

But I cannot stand Elrington's horse−laugh, said Mr. Winterdale.

His thanks, rather, said my mother: but if it is possible he should be so ill−bred and unfeeling, I assure you he will attack two of us, instead of one

Mr. Sharp was then announced. As soon as he was seated, Lady Winterdale said, Well, Mr. Sharp, have you seen our new carriage?

New carriage, Ma'am, I don't know what your ladyship means, said he.

I mean, rejoined my mother, that Mr. Winterdale thinks it very preposterous I should walk on foot; and we have got one of the most elegant carriages you ever saw.

Mr. Sharp turned to that gentleman, with eyes that asked a confirmation of the intelligence. Mr. Winterdale looked at him stedfastly, and was silent.

Mr. Winterdale has proposed our going to Aberystwith, continued my mother. For my part, I should have given the preference to Brighton, or Margate; but, as Aberystwith is his choice, I shall have great pleasure in seeing the mountains and glens of Wales.

And are you really, and indeed, going to Aberystwith, Sir? demanded Mr. Sharp. I thought you had been a kind of a gentleman that had always liked to stay at home.

He must be a very odd kind of a gentleman, said my mother, who, because he chose to stay at home sometimes, should like to do so always.

Well, I declare, I'm sure, I thought your ladyship was joking, said Mr. Sharp.

I do not know any body more in earnest, said Mr. Winterdale.

And pray, ladies, said Mr. Sharp to my cousin and me, do you go too?

Yes, replied I, it is just a family party, and nothing more.

Well, that is delightful! cried Mr. Sharp; the very pleasantest thing in all the world! Now, my dear, charming, lovely, Miss Mowbray, I have one favour to beg of you, and I'm sure you can't deny me; do, pray, let me go along with you.

It is a family party, only, answered Eleanor; and it is not in my power to add to the number.

Nay, now, said Mr. Sharp, you may take me; for you know you can add me to the family *wheniver* you please.

Mr. Winterdale laughed; Henry looked grave; and Eleanor coloured, and seemed uneasy.

Mr. Sharp, said I, we are always happy to see you here; but the house we are going to at Aberystwith, cannot accommodate any body but ourselves.

I knew you would be against me, said Mr. Sharp, Some ladies don't like to see other ladies greater favourites than themselves.

Here I laughed; and Henry, in spite of himself, joined me.

But, continued the gentleman, I don't want your house. There are lodgings enough at Aberystwith; and sure your house will hold me for a morning call. If it won't, Miss Mowbray and I can walk upon the sands, and drink the spa water together.

There is no spa water at Aberystwith, said Eleanor, and I am told there are no sands.

Well, there's sea−water, or *somethink*, I suppose, returned Mr. Sharp; and let it be *whativer* it will; if its *pyson*, I'll drink it with you.

You must excuse me, said Eleanor. I cannot possibly make any addition to Lady Winterdale's party.

O, I understand you now, said Mr. Sharp, I wonder where my wits *was*, that I did not take you at first.

The wonder is not that you mislaid them, but that you have found them, said Mr. Winterdale, for they will go into a nut shell at any time.

Now, my dear Lady Winterdale, resumed Mr. Sharp, without noticing her husband's remark, you see Miss Mowbray refers me to you.

Pardon me, interrupted Eleanor, I refer you to nobody.

Why, did not you say, just now, that you could not consent without Lady Winterdale?

By no means. I said I could not consent at all.

Ho, ho! that will *niver* do. Young ladies must not be the *explainers* of their own speeches. And so, my dear Lady Winterdale, I am sure you will take me along with you; for you are the very sweetest and best *temper'dest* lady that *iver* I knew in all my life. I am sure Mr. Winterdale, himself, could not make you cross.

I am afraid my present temper does not deserve so fine a compliment, said my mother; for as we are going merely for the sake of the sea air, we must defer the pleasure of your company till our return.

Your Ladyship against me too! cried Mr. Sharp, I could *niver* have thought it.

The ladies use you very ill this morning, Sharp, said Mr. Winterdale; but never mind; I will take you under my protection. They cannot hinder you from mounting your horse and riding to Aberystwith; and when you are there, I'll give you a slice of Welsh mutton; for you are the *very best and entertainingest companion* that *iver I met with in all my life*.

O dear, Sir, said Mr. Sharp, I vow and declare I can't tell whether you are in joke or earnest; but I'm very much obliged to you, Sir; very much obliged to you, indeed. I see one may live and learn. I'm sure I did not think you liked good company at all, or that you liked me in *partikalar*. But pray, Sir, would it not be the same thing to you, if I was to go to Aberystwith in a post chaise? because I can't say I much fancy riding on horseback.

You have my leave to go in a balloon, if you like it, replied Mr. Winterdale.

Oh! horrid! exclaimed Mr. Sharp, with a grimace. I would not trust myself in a balloon no, not even for the company of my dearest Miss Mowbray! No sailing among the stars for me. It is the *surprisingest* thing in the world, Sir, that any man should venture his neck at such a height above the solid earth! I'm sure my head would turn like a weathercock. And, besides, Sir, a man, with a stout strong arm, may stop a horse: but who can either pull in a balloon, or turn it into another road? For my part, I think its quite *presumpshus*.

I think it a little daring, myself, said Mr. Winterdale. As we invade the dominion of the birds, without their wings, I expect we shall attempt to live among the fishes, without their fins.

And so, to be sure we shall, indeed, Sir, returned Mr. Sharp; and we have got cork jackets, and apparatus's, to make a beginning. But, Sir, as you have the goodness to give me leave to go in a post chaise, I should he excessively happy, Sir, turning to Henry, if you would do me the favour, to let me have the honour of your company. I suppose, Sir, there cannot be room for you in the carriage, and I should think it would be much more *agreeabler* to you than riding on horseback.

I thank you, Sir, replied Henry, but I prefer riding on horseback.

Well, now that to me is most amazing, said Mr. Sharp, that it should be in the *nater* of man to like trouble better than ease, and danger better than being safe; and as for such a snorting, pawing, capering animal as your's, I would not mount him for his worth in gold. I would almost as soon back one of the *pegasses* of former days, that had wings growing from their shoulders.

Mr. Sharp, having thus modestly secured himself a niche among us, was in haste to publish the news at the Vicarage; where, Mr. Winterdale has got a carriage, from town, and, Mr. Winterdale is going to Aberystwith, with all his family, would be canvassed, and turned into every possible form.

Mr. Winterdale proved to his lady, that she had not complimented him on his dispatch, without some reason. That very day he engaged a coachman; on Sunday we went to church, in our new carriage; and on Monday we dined with the Elringtons.

Mr. Winterdale made no further objection to being of the party; but the sufferings of his mind were visible in his looks; and when we were set down at Pentre Hall, which is the name of their place, he was almost in a trepidation. When we entered the drawing room, he made his bows to the family in silence; and it was not till we had been seated some time, that he assumed courage to tell Mr. Elrington, Lady Winterdale had convinced him it would be for his honour and happiness to live upon friendly terms with his neighbours; he had already put a stop to the contention between that gentleman and himself, and hoped it would be forgotten in a mutual interchange of good offices.

Mr. Elrington shook hands with him heartily, and assured him there was not a man on earth he should be more glad to call his friend; Mrs. Elrington congratulated herself on her good fortune, in acquiring such neighbours, and the Misses Elrington, after overwhelming Eleanor and me with fine speeches, heaped them upon Henry, till he was glad to turn from them, to the plain good sense of their brother.

At dinner, when Mrs. Elrington asked Mr. Winterdale to take a little calves head ash, Perhaps, my dear, said her husband, Mr. Winterdale would prefer a bit of chicken. When she asked him to take another bit of chicken, my dear, said he, you cram your friend with chicken; I will help Mr. Winterdale to a slice of venison. When Henry asked Mrs. Elrington to take a glass of wine, and she named port, he said, I wonder at you, my dear; you might be sure the gentleman would have chosen Madeira.

In the course of the visit, my mother mentioned our intended excursion to Aberystwith. Mr. Elrington said he should like to go there, with his family, at the same time. Mrs. Elrington approved the proposal, and added, Do, let us go. But, my dear, how can you go? was his answer. Don't you know we expect the Vaughans? You would not run away from them, would you? Certainly not, replied the obedient wife; but, perhaps, we could write to them to defer their visit. You would not be so rude, surely, said the husband, as to forbid them your house! Why, no, replied the lady; I do not know that we could. I believe you are right.

I believe I generally am, my dear, when you and I happen to differ in opinion, said this married bashaw.

My mother told Mrs. Elrington she should have had great pleasure in her society at Aberystwith, and was sorry that circumstances did not permit them to go. Mrs. Elrington owned it would have been a gratification to her; but Mr. Elrington had convinced her that it was impossible. Her husband said, she need not be so positive; for it did not amount to an impossibility, neither; and, perhaps the Vaughans might not come till spring. Mrs. Elrington assured him she had not a wish to go to Aberystwith, as it was not agreeable to him; and he concluded by telling her, with a sneer, that she never knew her own mind.

Is the situation of woman such that she must play the tyrant, or become a slave? and is man such an abject creature that he must either domineer or crouch? Cannot two rational beings steer a middle course, in which each should alternately assert its rights, and give them up to the other? I will consult Montgomery on the subject. He

does not like the unconditional command and submission of a military life, and, as he does like me, may, perhaps, be content to regard me as an equal. But, believe me, my dear Harriet, in general, it is not the weakest, but the best, that goes to the wall.

Mr. Winterdale was grave and reserved, during the remainder of the visit; but no longer timid. When Mr. Elrington ventured to aim a jest at him, my mother caught it dextrously, and almost imperceptibly; and sent it back to its author, with the laugh of the company; except once or twice, where the retort was very palpable, she left Mr. Winterdale's defence to himself.

Mr. Francis is a modest, unassuming young man. He felt the gross indignities offered to his mother; but did not think proper to notice them. He sighs for Eleanor. None of these coldblooded sons of the mountains warm themselves by the fire of my eyes. They catch a gentle spark from her, which increases, by little and little, till it bursts into a flame. It is lucky for me there are Indian Montgomeries, near neighbours of the sun, of such combustible natures, that a paltry Will o' the wisp will set them in a blaze.

Instead of two, I have scribbled over four sheets of paper, and have not yet set out for Aberystwith. Pardon me, my dear Harriet, and be assured that, in my next, you shall be conducted thither by

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 43. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Aberystwith, Sept. 26, 1812.

We found the road to this place mountainous, and, in some places, tremendous; but, instead of giving you a minute description of these gigantic productions of nature, and the lovely vales which separate them, I am tempted to relate a circumstance that happened at an inn, where we stopped to breakfast; though I am no otherwise interested in it, than as an eye and ear witness.

We were shewn into a room up stairs, which was exactly in the state it had been left in the night before; the tables and chairs were covered with dust, and a lace frill lay on the sopha. The waiter, who was chambermaid also, began to dust the furniture, and to apologize for its want of order, by saying she had been up all night with a lady who was ill. Humanity led us to enquire into the situation of the lady; and, at last, the girl put on a face of secresy and importance, and said, the lady's husband had taken too much wine the night before, and had pushed her against a chest of drawers, by which she had hurt her side.

We pitied the poor lady; were glad to hear she was better; and Eleanor and I took our seats, while breakfast was preparing, at a window that looked into the street of a little country town.

We saw a tall, athletic well−looking man, turned of thirty, and dressed in black, sauntering about, and turning his eyes on every side, as if he was expecting some person to join him. At length he entered the inn.

We soon after saw another man making towards the inn, dressed also in black, and sufficiently handsome; but younger than the first, and not so tall. His occupation was obvious. A small parcel, which he carried in his hand, denoted him to be a traveller; not in the original and general meaning of the term, which includes all who travel by land and by water; but in its modern and limited acceptation a man who travels for orders in trade. This gentleman was a coxcomb of such obtrusive magnitude, that no one could avoid seeing him; or could look at any other object, while he remained in view. He took off his hat, to shew his curled, flaxen hair; he arranged his curls,

to shew his white hand: he walked on tiptoe, and swung his patterns over his shoulder, to shew his agility and dexterity. He, too, entered the inn.

In a moment we were alarmed by a violent scuffle below, and a cry of murder. Other voices soon joined the uproar; and a bason of water was called for; by which we supposed there was blood. We listened at the top of the stairs, and heard the culprit endeavouring to excuse himself, by saying he had taken too much wine; and an enraged voice answer, A man's a man, drunk or sober! You're a villain. I will expose you in every town, and company I go into; and, wherever I meet you, I will serve you as I have done here!

When the tumult had a little subsided, we rang the bell. The mistress of the house came up stairs; and, with tremulous voices, we enquired what was the occasion of the mischief, and what the mischief done. Ladies, replied she, in a voice still more agitated than ours, I will tell you all.

The gentlemen, continued our hostess, are both travellers, and from London. One of them Here we interrupted her, by saying we believed we had seen them both. Our description of them proved we were not mistaken, and she proceeded.

Well, then, the tall gentleman is married; his wife is a very pretty woman; they have been married ten years. We know him very well. He comes here every year, and he is so fond of her, that he travels in a gig and always takes her with him. Of course, they have a private room, and do not eat with other travellers. They have got acquainted with the other gentleman, on this journey, by travelling the same road, and stopping at the same inns; and they have allowed him to eat and sit with them, instead of sitting in the public room; and it has frequently happened that he and the wife have been left together, while the husband has been out upon business. They were in this room, last night, by themselves; and, when the husband came home, he sat drinking, in the travellers' room, below, with some of his customers, and the other gentleman joined them.

The lady sat here, continued the mistress of the inn, till she was tired, and then went to bed, in the white room, next to this, on the left hand. After some time, the single gentleman left the company; and the chambermaid took his candle, and shewed him into the room on the right hand of this; and, soon after, the lady's husband, as he supposed, entered her room. She was dropping asleep; but it rouzed her. 'Rowley,' said she, for that is her husband's name, 'you use me very ill. Last night you got tipsey, and kept me up; and to−night, that I would not wait for you, you disturb my rest. Come to bed; but you shall not serve me so again.'

'Hush, hush!' he cried softly; and was stepping into bed; when the lady turned her head, and perceived it was not her husband. She instantly jumped out of bed; seized the other traveller, for it was he, by the collar of his shirt, and cried, 'Villain! if you do not leave my room this moment, I will raise the house!' The villain did not heed the warning; and she kept struggling with him, till she found the bell, which she rang with great violence. He then left the room; and, when the chambermaid entered it, in answer to the bell, the lady was alone. She related. these circumstances to the chambermaid, in great agitation, and again went to bed. The girl was so imprudent as to repeat the story to the husband, who, inflamed with rage and wine, rushed up stairs, and shut himself up in the room with his wife. Presently we heard a great noise, and piercing screams from the lady. I ran up stairs, and bolted into the room, and found her on her knees, with her body bended back; her husband with one hand at her throat, and, with the other supporting the back of her head. She was almost suffocated. Intoxicated as the gentleman was, both with wine and passion, he had sense enough left to know that his wife had, of her own accord, driven out the intruder, by ringing the bell; but he insisted upon it that she must have given him some improper encouragement, before he could have attacked her in so daring a manner. He vowed he would never more enter her bed, and ordered one to be made up for himself, in another room.

Such was the melancholy story related by the mistress of the inn; which I have given you, as nearly as possible, in her own words. It appeared, from the subsequent account of the chambermaid, that the unfortunate wife, outraged by a villain, and half murdered by a frantic husband, had passed the greatest part of the night in fits.

Though we had felt great horror at hearing the punishment inflicted by the husband on the disturber of his own and his wife's repose, we rejoiced at it, now we knew the provocation; especially as it amounted to no more than two black eyes and a bloody nose, and consequently affected the beauty, and not the life, of the offender; and as we were, in some measure, parties in the fray, by being known to be within hearing, we ventured to hint, in the hope it might be repeated, that after the vengeance the husband had taken, it would be kind in him to remit that part of the sentence, which promised a repetition of it every time he should meet the delinquent.

The poor wife remained in bed, during the whole of the engagement; and, as her chamber was immediately over the scene of action, must have heard the whole of it; but we were told, before we left the inn, that her husband was not only reconciled to her, but extremely penitent for his brutal behaviour; ascribing it to the wine he had drank; though he would not admit that plea in favour of his fellow traveller.

The flaxen−haired hero, who valiantly attacked a defenceless woman, in her bedchamber, and cried out, Murder, on the just chastisement of her husband, was obliged to pass through our room to get to his own. He crossed the end of it, with a bason under his nose, and a surgeon at his heels. Three days after our arrival at Aberystwith, he made his appearance here with a green silk shade over his eyes; and struts, and swings his arms, as if he trusted to his person to make conquests, without the aid of his face. But, our servants having repeated the story, the mistress of the inn will not allow him a place at the public table. He is shunned by every living creature, except his dog; who, not being a competent judge of his master's actions, is content to associate with him, and ride in his gig; and he is pointed out, as he goes along the street, under the appellation of *The Knight of the Green Shade*.

There is no drive on the shore at Aberystwith; or in the country round, without climbing a steep hill. We walk on the shore; but it is neither a commodious or extensive promenade, being composed of loose pebbles, and bounded, at the distance of about half a mile, by a most magnificent promontory of dark rock.

Ever yours,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 44. TO MUSTER WYLLYAM MANDAL.

Aburisty, Suptimber 27.

Honerit Cur,

With al luv an dooty an blessin this be to lett yo to no as us be got safe and sownd to this plase, uthout ony miss fortin or brockin bons, an that I has sin the gret salt sey. Bot Gods marsy, what a thing it is! I oost to think as how it mut be like unto hour big fishpon, only moor bigger an yujus; and I thot as a boddi mut luck down inter it lik as a draw well; bot no boddi conna hay no high dear on it, till thy do see it. Wen I fust sid it at a distons, an all the botes upon it, nevr trust me, uf I did nat think thy war so monny carts on a' turbury. Ustid o being wattur culler, as watter shold be, it luckt grin an purpil like; an ustid o being in a hollar as watter oost to be, Ile be burnd uf it did not ryse up lik a hil. An now I be clos too it, and do see that it be watur, it lucks as uf it ris the highur the forder it went; and I conna find owt, for the blud on me, wot it be as kips it uthin bownds.

We be the grandest gentlefoks at abberisty, and I do not se nevr a carrig so fine as hourn, wich, as it be spike and spoon, an bran new frum Lunnon citty, binna very wunderable. An I assur yo I be got verry smort, now I be vallit *and* futman; an I tise mi hyre, an wares wite stockins, an coks mi hat uth the best on um.

Mastr be verry gud, an verry quite; an hee do evvery thin as my lady do bid him. My sole, wot a chang has hur made! I didna think as it cud be in mortle ooman. Hur do curry him sofly, an smuth him down, and do helter him uth hur appern string.

Ther be a plas hear as thy do call the port; bot for wy I conna tell; for it be no moor liker our red port, nor it be like unto a bole o punge. Howsevr it be a plas o wattr war the ships do randivoos, and lode an onlode; an thy be so nashon big, that won on um wul carri moor nor ony too brod willd wagins: an thy do stort for forrin parts, sich as the oil o man, an quit as for as milk fat haven.

An I be such a tite feller that the wenchis be arter me, mornin, nun, an nite, an I mi pik a chus; but I dos not no yit wother I shal purfar ony on um to Jinny housmade; but hur mun mynde hur pp and qq, I con tel hur that.

As for the welsmen, I conna sy as I lik um much, becase wy, thy be no bettr nor hotting toads, an wild men o the hoods. To be sur, in the town thy be a littel liker chrishtins, and ool ge a bodi a sivvil anser; bot in the countre thy be throing thar dim sarsnets in yore tith for evr lastin, an the doos an other wurd con yo gett from um.

I be so jimmy yo wunna no me wen I gets wom; an I be affeard as my hosses wunna no me; an if the pure dam things do na spak to me; so as I has rubid um an fed um, an waturd um, an fettlud um, an evry thing; I shall be dedly vecksit, thats sartin. I has larnt a thing or too at aburisty, that mappen, I ma remembr wile I do live. I be got acquintid with curnal Sundylands vallet, as be hear; an him an me, an hour cochmun an thar grum, do ply at wisk, for sickspuns a cornur. I was mortle lothe at fust, an wantid to ply for luv; but thy loffed me out on it; an now I do see that munni be best; for last nite I wun hoaf a crown.

As for al that I con larn at chorch, I may pot it e my i, an see nevr the wus for it. It be al jibber, jabber, lik the chaterin o the magpys, and I conna, for my sole, under stumble a wurd on it: and all I do wundr at is, how them ther ethons can mak sens on it.

Dere Muster Mendal, yo do see as how I be eprooved i mi riting, an moor nor that e mi spellin, thanckes be to yoo for it. So no moor at prison frum yores til deth.

RALPH RUSSETTING.

Letter 45. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Aberystwith, Oct. 3, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

I like the air of this place prodigiously; and do not know whether I shall ever breathe that of Winterdale again these ten years to come; that being about the time to which I may limit my claim to the adoration of mankind. We are quite the fashion in Wales. No such dressing; no such dancing; no such equipage! and, as Eleanor seems retiring into the shade with her beloved Henry, I shine out with redoubled splendour. I see, my dear, I only wanted a proper atmosphere to do my wonted execution. The frozen clods of Winterdale, and its vicinity, were out of my sphere of attraction; here the masses of earth called men, are moulded from a different soil; and many of them have a portion of London dirt in their composition, which has felt my influence before.

The plain matter of fact is, that Aberystwith has afforded me two new lovers; and, to drop my sublime metaphor, I believe the reason of it is, that there are some men of fashion here, and no women who can come in competition with ourselves.

My first captive is a soldier you know I am an adept at subduing military men. He is turned of forty; tall, well−looking, robust, and a colonel. He had the good fortune to dance with me at an Aberystwith ball another coincidence of circumstances military men cannot withstand my dancing. By dint of joining us afterwards in the public walks, he has pushed his good fortune so far, as to become acquainted with Mr. Winterdale; who, like his great grandmother Eve, will not, unsought, be won ; but who, now, so far resembles that lady that he may be won with seeking. The gallant colonel has even condescended to study Mr. Winterdale. He plays sixpenny whist with him, and assists him in playing off Mr. Sharp; whose arrival at Aberystwith the day after ourselves, I believe, I forgot to announce.

After a fortnight's sighing and looking unutterable things, Colonel Sunderland ventured to tell me of his ardent love; of the inexpressible happiness he should feel, if I would vouchsafe to give him the most distant hope that I might one day be prevailed upon to return the smallest part of it; that I was the arbitress of his fate; and many other very handsome things, of the same kind, that, I dare say, you, my dear Harriet, or any other pretty young woman, may well imagine; from having heard them half a dozen times, at least.

I assumed a very grave look, which, you know, is not the natural cast of my countenance, and told him that my whole fortune was in chancery, and it was doubtful whether I should ever be worth a shilling. He was shocked and speechless. At length he recovered himself sufficiently to stammer out hopes that I should gain my cause; and an acknowledgement that he was not in a situation to marry without money. On reflection, however, the undaunted warrior seems determined not to give up the pursuit it will be time enough to do that, you know, when the cause is decided against me.

In the beginning of our acquaintance with Colonel Sunderland, as he was sauntering with us by the shapeless ruins of an old castle, near this place, we were met by a handsome, gentlemanly man, about five and twenty, who accosted the colonel with the familiarity of an old acquaintance. The colonel introduced him to us as Sir Edward Halifax; he joined us; and did not make his bow till we arrived at our own door. He, too, is become our visitor; and, I assure you, has his looks, as well as the colonel; and it is from them I guess his meaning; for, as yet, he has not declared it by words.

Now, my dear Harriet, tell me, ought I to marry a petty subaltern, when I can have a colonel, that is, if I gain my cause? Shall I carry a knapsack, when I may march from town to town, in my own carriage, drawn by a pair of post horses? Assuredly no: I cannot be so degraded. Of course then, the colonel must do not be frightened; for I am going to add not, be the man; and for a very simple reason, which is that honour, justice, and affection are engaged on the side of another.

The same reason, I fear, will decide against the baronet. I never can accept the honour of becoming Lady Halifax, if it should be offered me; because I have determined to be Lady Montgomery, after the decease of the old nabob, if his son should have given me the opportunity.

But, my dear Harriet, do you conceive it necessary to shun one man, because he has made an offer of himself to my fortune; or another, because I have reason to think he likes my person? Am I to place myself in a corner of the room, with my face to the wall, and my back to the company; and say to the gentlemen, I dare not look at you, and I forbid your looking at me, for I am not to be had? I think not. You know that I stand engaged to do what is right, as far as my judgment will direct me: I have consulted judgment on this occasion, and the award seems to be Converse with both your admirers with your accustomed ease and vivacity. Let your words and looks be the transcript of your heart; and, as that feels no partiality for either, your behaviour cannot mislead them. Judgment, I thank you: for I own I should think you a hard master, if you forbade me the society of my fellow creatures, because they happened to like me, and be of a different sex. I think, however, that Judgment, or his sister, Prudence, would enjoin me to avoid all opportunities of being alone with either of the gentlemen; and I shall take care to obey the mandate.

Henry's attachment to my cousin is a decided thing; though he has not yet made any declaration. She, herself, no longer doubts it. His manner is irresistible. He does not appear to watch her, or lay her under the smallest restraint. Her conversation is free for every body. But the moment any service or assistance can be rendered, before she is even conscious of any want, he is with her. Nothing escapes him; and the sweet smile of gratitude she frequently rewards him with, over−pays every exertion.

I have thought, my dear friend, if there be happiness below, it is in the silent consciousness of mutual love; such love as this; the lovers such, and so situated. He, handsome, manly, noble, generous, and. a little pensive. She, beautiful, modest, delicate, and tender. The whole soul of each devoted to the other; and the love, though supposed to be concealed, and, certainly not revealed by words; yet peeping and peering through every look and action: every such look and action treasured up in the other's heart.

The future presents no alloy to the present happiness of Eleanor and Henry; for, if Mr. Winterdale should oppose it, he is prepared to assert his independence, and she is her own mistress. But, so evanescent is this state of enjoyment, that every step towards its completion must diminish it. Love talked of is not so delicious, as love sought for, and silently discovered; and then the low concerns of the world mix with it; and jointures, houses, furniture and wearing apparel, come in for their share.

Henry no longer bestows an uneasy thought on Mr. Sharp; but sees him buz about Eleanor with as little emotion as if it were a gnat; which insect he resembles in all points, except the bite. Nor is Mr. Sharp more discomposed on account of Henry. His optics do not discern Henry's attachment, and he still considers Eleanor as his property; the time, only, when he may be permitted to claim her uncertain.

In contemplating my cousin's happiness, I send a sigh after Montgomery; far distant, and under the domination of a haughty father, too justly prejudiced against me. Envy, however, has no share in the sighs of

Yours,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 46. TO MR. WILLIAM MENDALL

Aberystwith, Oct. 5, 1812

Dear Mendall,

I hope you have not forgotten that Saturday was the rent day of the Winterdale tenants; and that you have not failed to make every rascal of them pay up to last Lady Day. I think one half year's rent in their hands is a pretty indulgence; I am sure it is a great loss to me. But a farmer is never satisfied; not even with his Maker. If it rains, he wants sunshine; and if the sun shines, he wants rain. It is just the same to his landlord. If he makes him pay his rent when due, he is a hard−hearted oppressor: if he lets him keep it half a year, pay day must come at last; and he is hard−hearted still. It is a cursed unlucky time to be from home, myself; not that I entertain a doubt of your integrity, as you know; but for fear the whining of some of the poorer scoundrels should make an impression on you. I have a wife, myself, and a confounded expensive one; and I want money as much as they.

You will place the money in the strong box I left with you, and lock it up in the great chest in your room, till my return. As to the iron chest, in which I keep the gold, I have not only the keys with me; but the key of the closet in which it stands, and the key of the chamber in which is the closet; but you will do well to try the chamber door, night and morning. I believe the closet could never be discovered, if the room were broken into, as the door is so exactly fitted in the wainscoat; but one cannot be too secure. I have, so far, contrived not to touch my hoard,

notwithstanding Madam's extravagance; and hope I shall still do without it.

Ah! Mendall! Let no man ever make his calculations, and say, I marry for this, or that advantage. Let him think of me, and take what may befal him. I have been disappointed in every good I proposed to myself by marriage, except the person of the woman. I thought her handsome, and, I will do her justice; she is not crooked, and does not paint. But I thought her frugal, and find her extravagant: I thought her fond of retirement, and she cannot live out of company: I thought her rich, and she is over head and ears in debt: I thought her obedient, and she is my master. In what regards her daughter, too, I believe I shall experience the same fate. I meant her for my son; and Liberal, to whom I shewed the documents, before I came hither, more honest than that sycophant Foreclose, and more learned than myself, tells me she will lose her cause. I have some satisfaction, however, in reflecting that it has been properly conducted: and nothing has been omitted during my superintendance.

But, Mendall, as you have seen me disappointed in all my expectations, it is but fair to tell you that I experience some comforts I did not foresee. On the whole, I lead a happier life than when you and I were alone. I have more enjoyments assembled about me; though, to be sure I pay high enough for them. Give her Ladyship her way, and she is always good humoured, and solicitous to please me: Henry looks cheerful and happy: the girls are delighted to wait upon me, or oblige me: Colonel Sunderland, who visits us every day, is a clever fellow, and a good player at whist, though he does not like to play for more than sixpences; and Sharp, though the weakest puppy breathing, is a comical dog, and an excellent laughing stock. So, you see, I have not laid out my money for nothing.

As to Ralph, I hardly know, what to make of him. When we first came here, I thought the sea air had turned his brain. He entertained me, while I was dressing, with so many remarks on a mass of waters he had never seen before, and on a people who did not speak his own language; that I thought he might publish his travels, and hinted that he was qualified to write a tour in Wales. Then he took to decorating his person after the model of the gayest servants here; and became an unheard of mixture of Winterdale *ploughism* and London *dash.* I concluded him spoiled for ever, and thought of looking out for some honest country fellow in his place; when two nights ago, he came home with a black eye, and has been the picture of misery and mortification, ever since. The cause he will not tell, either to me, or his fellow servants; but I hope it is some penance that will restore him to his senses, and prevent me from discharging a man who has served me so long, and so well, in his way.

Send me, on the receipt of this, a particular account of the rent day.

JOHN WINTERDALE.

Letter 47. TO MUSTER WYLLYM MENDALE

Abberisty, hock to beer, 1812.

Honerid Cur,

This do com uth mi umbel luv and dooty, hopping to find yo as it do leve me; only not in sorow and trubel, as I be at this prison. dere muster mendull, I has bin a very grat fewl; but nobodi do no it; bot I ull tell yu al. I thot miself a fine fellor, an I soshiated uth kernel sundylands grum and vallet, an plyd at wisk, an wun hauf a crown; an the necks tim I wun five shillin, and thy sed as I was a dip un. An now I mun let yo to no as I had a huge mind of a sollid silvur wach, afore I laft wom, an I thot to myself, thincks I aberisty be a fine plase, an thar be plenti o grand wach makkers theer, an so I wull by me a wach wan I gets to abburisty, an pik an chews won as ull shoot me: but wen I comd here, the juice of arron was to be fun. But I forgets to insense you that, afour I sot out, I tuk five pond nots, an I sowed um up in the lynin o' mi wascott, for feer o robburs and high wimmin; an I pot five shilun e ml poccit, to spend lik, uf ockasion mut be, uth a friend or tew, by chanch. An so, wan id such mortle gud luk at wisk, thincks I to miself, I shal win enof to bye me a wach uth, and I ull by it some tim wan I gos to mark it; an I

ull lok mi five nots up e mi bocks, wi mi tuthers. An so I want on, an want on, an I sun lost all as id wun, and thre an sickspunce as I had laft o mi spendin munny; and than I laft of an sed as id no moor. Bot than thy loffed at me, an geered me, an sed, yo a gentelmans sarvunt! yo be nuthin but som pur di laberer, uth a wife an five begerley brats, an yer mastr a tacken yo frum the plow tyle, for the jurny. Icod! thy put up mi blud soo, at last, that I up wth mi hands, an ript oppen mi wascot, and shod um mi five banck o inglond nots. Then thy begun to draw in thar horns, an curri fever we me, an strowket me down, an sed as how thy wan onli a jok; an uf I ood try mi luk aggen, I mat mack mi five nots ten. Tom fewl beleeft um; an sot down agen; an by som tims whinin a letel, an som tims lowsin a gray jet, I got to lowse tew o mi pond nots. Desprat mad I wor, to be suer! An won o the himps o darcknis sed, he cold not thinck however it could bee; for I was a bettr plyer nor thy, he node; for I wos won o the noing uns. An the tother said he node that, an uf hee was as me heed hav his tew nots bak aggen; for heed ply dubbel or quits: an Tom fewl was fewl aggen; an soo I lost fore o mi nots.

I thot, for sartin, I should a gon crackky! an I storted up, an I sas, sas I, I ull hay some moor ply for mi mony, howsevr; yo shanna ge me sich howdayshus yousich for this: an I gid muster grum a rite gud dab o the chops. I got a black hi, to be suer; bot I did na mind that; for I gen him sich a drubbin as I thinks he wil remembr the lungist dy he have to liv. An than I calld out to muster vallitt, as he was a snekin out o the rum, hollo! sas I, sty a bit! I has gotten annother gam for yo! but th rog hood no sty to ply it; soo I just gen him a gad kik behynd, has he went out o the doer; an wan I mits um uth the strit, I blos me nose at um.

Yo ma thinck as how I was nayshon molluncolly arter sich a los, an sich fewlisnis, bot I hood na tel noboddy; an to mack bad wars, thar comd a litel black luckin feller to aburisty, an he hoppend a shop about as big squar as won o mi corn bins, and hung it all rownd uth waches, an rings, an dymonts, an silvar spoons, an silvar thimbels, and all thy kynd o rich things. An ther I sid a new, brite, silver wach, as big as the topp o hour cuks drugger bocks. I luckt at it with a longin hi, an I thot to miself, uf I haddna bin a fule, now that wach mut ha bin mine. At last I thot I hood gust goo in, and hacks the prise; ther cold not be no harm e that. Wy, sas the mon, the prise be five pond, and he be dog chep at that; but as yo sim to have a grate mind on it yo shall have it for fore. Lord, lord! how did I vecks to thinck, that evr I shold be sich a hass, as to meddel uth the cards, an miss sich a borgin. So I een tould the mon the wool story, an lett him to no as I had no moor nor won pund not laft. Well, sas hee, then to hoblege yo, the wach shall be raffleed for. Do yo sett yor nam down heer, for won pund, an as sun as I gett thre moor, yo shal throw for the wach; and then uf yo gets it for yer won pond note, ye wool be as well of as uf yod never playd at wisk: bot be suer as yo dos not part uth the not to nobbody elce. I did not verry wel no wot throwing wos; but he shoed me a litel bocks, an a pare o dys, an rackled um, an throd um out, an I was suer I cold do that: so I rot Ralph Russetting, as he bid me; and he tould me too get as monny nams as evr I cud, that we mut throw the sunner; an our cochman had not nevr a wach, and he sot his nam down; an us purswadid Cur Yethed Aleifacks man to sett his nam down, an the mon o the shop he got annother; and us all pyde our pond nots, an than us throd. I throd fust, and the mon sad, that be a good un; nuboddy unna bete that, Inos; I allis thot as yod a whinin fase: and then Sur Yethards mon, he throd, an he cold na come up to me, nor near; an than the strang man throd, an he was wursar yit. Now, thincks I to miself, the wach is mine; for he must be ither mine or the cochmons, an I had the whinin fase; an so the cochman throwd, an has the devvle hood have it, hee bet me. Howsevr the olde un was but his frend by hauvs, for the wach stans stok still, an ool na stur, for all the triks that evr he can ply. Coachy tuk him bak to the litel black fellor, an he told him to set him to rites; bot he sad the wach was a thurrow good un, an it wos non of his bisnis to mend him. It be som comfoot to have a frind in hood farcity; an I tels cochman uf I was as him, I hood take mi coche wip to mi wach, an sarv him as I sarvd mi hossis, an mak him goo. Bot I shold deerly lik to pule that littel black fellar out in his shop, an lether him, as I did the grum; onley I darsunt.

Deer muster Mandale, yo do see as how my notes be all fled awy, an I has not a sickspens in my poccit. Thy do sy that ecksparunse maks fewls wise; an uf it be trew, I be lik to be wise miself; for I can sy by ecksparuns, I has been fewl enof. If evr yo do si me prick up mi heres, wan I gets wom, an thinck miself a fine fellor, do yo tel me o aberisty. Ther be won thing as I be glad on yit; an that be as I did not pruv fause to Jeny; for uf id a gin miself up to the wenchis, thy mut a done me, as wel as the men; an I cold not ha lickt um, as I did mastr grum. So no more at prisent from yore kind an sorrowful wel wishar, and umbel sarvant,

RALPH RUSSETTING.

Letter 48. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Aberystwith, Oct. 10, 1812

My dear Harriet,

The contents of this letter will not be of the most agreeable complexion. In the first place, we have received intelligence from Mr. Mountney that the Montgomery cause will be heard very soon; and he acknowledges he is not so sanguine in his expectations of success, as he was some time ago. This, from my own solicitor, I imagine almost amounts to a decree against me.

Were Montgomery and I independent of our family, not only in circumstances but in mind, little would it matter to which of us the estate belonged; but, a father, such as his, between us, how much more desirable for me to bestow a favour than receive one! to furnish the means of repairing my misconduct, than to take it with me, as a burthen upon him!

This chancery suit, my dear Harriet, is a touchstone for my lovers. Like the rose of the fairy prince, which, laid on the bosom of his mistress, distinguished the faithful from the false, it brings to light the admirers of my person, and those of my fortune.

Colonel Sunderland received such a sudden order to join his regiment, two days after the communication of Mr. Mountney was made known to him, that he could not take a personal leave of us; but left a note to Mr. Winterdale, with his servant, to be delivered after he was gone. Sir Edward Halifax, on the contrary, has assumed a courage he was not master of before, and has earnestly solicited my permission to make proposals to my guardians, without waiting the event of the suit. His person, manners, understanding, and fortune, are unexceptionable; and I might probably have loved him, if I had not known Montgomery. But I can be very serious upon a serious occasion. Without owning my attachment to another, which I did not think necessary, I declined his addresses in a manner that could admit of no doubt.

Sir Edward hoped that time and assiduity might alter my opinion, and produce some change in his favour; and begged to be permitted to continue his visits. I assured him my opinion was already favourable to him; as must be that of every person to whom he was known; and Lady Winterdale, as well as myself, would always receive him with pleasure: but that with regard to any visits particularly intended to me, I could not admit them, and was certain my opinion could not change on this subject. I was so civil and so peremptory, he said, that I cut off all his hopes; but rather than lose intirely the privilege of seeing and conversing with me, he would accept it on my own terms.

Sir Edward still is with us every day, and joins in all our parties and excursions. My behaviour to him is just what it has ever been, cheerful, and without restraint; his, a little more reserved and pensive; approaching nearer that of Henry Winterdale to Eleanor than I could wish.

Now, my dear Harriet, I have an acquaintance to introduce to you, of such consequence that all others disappear before him. I will hasten to relieve you from the pain of conjecture.

This morning we took an airing along a very lonely, desolate part of the country, though upon what is here called a high road. My mother, Mr. Winterdale, Eleanor and I were in the carriage; Henry Winterdale and Sir Edward Halifax on horseback. We had gone more than six miles out, when the clouds, which had threatened some time, began to pour down; and the thunder and lightening became tremendous. We ordered the coachman to turn back;

he informed us there was a carriage broken down, a little further on; humanity prompted us to enquire into the situation of the travellers; and we bade him drive to the spot. We found the carriage totally disabled, and an elderly lady and gentleman standing by it, exposed to all the fury of the storm. No house, or shelter of any kind was in sight; mountainous sheep−walks appearing on one hand, and a foaming sea on the other.

Lady Winterdale immediately invited the lady and gentleman into her carriage; they accepted her offer with gratitude; and we drove towards Aberystwith. Ah! Harriet, how did the countenance of this gentleman alarm me, from its resemblance to that of Montgomery! and how did my heart forebode the truth for it was indeed his father! Montgomery had said that his father and mother were setting out on a tour; but though our meeting them was not improbable, as, of all tours, those in Wales are most frequent; yet their dropping from the moon could scarcely have been more unexpected.

After thanking Lady Winterdale again, in the most cordial manner, for her well−timed assistance, the gentleman told her, that he was Sir James Montgomery; and that Lady Montgomery and himself were travelling for their health and amusement, when their carriage broke down, as we had seen; and their continued exposure to the storm might have endangered their lives, if we had not so fortunately, and so kindly, come to their relief.

My mother replied, that the small service she might have rendered to any persons in their situation would have been a gratification to her; but, in the present instance, it was doubled, by her once having had the honour to belong to their family. She then added, with the most perfect ease, that she had been the wife of Sir George Montgomery, and was now the wife of Mr. Winterdale, slightly bowing to her husband; and that that young woman, looking at me, was her daughter.

The revolution this intelligence produced in the features of Sir James is indescribable. The gratitude and benignity which shone in his still fine dark eyes, became overcast in a moment, and all was gloom. What was his reply I know not. During the rest of the ride he spoke little, and all he said was evidently forced. Mr. Winterdale was not wanting in civility; but he never speaks much to strangers. I was dumb, and opened not my mouth. My mother talked with her accustomed ease and vivacity; and Lady Montgomery, affable and agreeable in her manners, and conscious of the painful restraint of our situation, contributed her share to the conversation. Henry Winterdale and Sir Edward Halifax were severally introduced by my mother to Sir James and Lady Montgomery.

When we arrived at Aberystwith we set the travellers down at the door of the inn, and then returned home, where this unexpected meeting furnished a sufficient topic for the rest of the day.

Every thought of my mind is directed towards Sir James Montgomery. Never did I so much desire to appear amiable in the eyes of his son, as I do in his; and never did I look and feel so stupid. Shall I see him again, my dear Harriet? or will he leave Aberystwith, without any further notice? Both are equally dreaded by

Yours

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

I forgot to say that Mr. Francis Elrington, the only one of the family who expressed no desire to come hither, arrived this morning.

Letter 49. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Aberystwith, Oct. 17, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

The morning after I wrote last my mother was endeavouring to convince Mr. Winterdale of the propriety of his going to the inn, to inquire after the health of Sir James and Lady Montgomery, and, doubtless would have succeeded, as she always does; when Sir James was announced. He said his carriage would be repaired that day, and he should leave Aberystwith early the next; but he could not quit it without renewing his acknowledgments for the favour he had received.

The manner of Sir James was cold and ceremonious; yet there was an anxiety in his countenance which made me apprehend he had something particular to say; and I was not surprized when he asked my mother, with a forced smile, if she would trust him a few moments alone with Miss Montgomery. My mother replied, with great gaiety, that she would trust his honour; though neither his age or his person; and left the room. Mr. Winterdale had been called out before.

Now, Harriet, what did I feel! Agitation, even to trembling; to the shaking of my whole frame; but none of those heart−felt agonies as when I feared the disclosure of my secret might make me be despised by his son. I remained silent; and Sir James scarcely knew how to begin. After some pause, he entered into the subject at once, by saying, I suppose you know, Madam, that I am acquainted with what has passed between you and my son.

Mr. Montgomery has informed me that you are, Sir.

I am sorry to distress a young lady; but I think it best for all parties that I should be explicit. He stopped. I was silent; and Sir James continued. You must be sensible that to borrow money of usurers is the resource of extravagance and misconduct, only; that it is so odious, so ruinous, even in a man, that a woman of common discretion would not unite herself to him, if she knew it. What, then, must it be in a young woman?

It is not possible for any person to be more shocked at such a proceeding than I am now, Sir. When I had recourse to the expedient it was to pay just debts, and it did not appear to me in so degrading a light.

Opinions change as our interest changes. You might still have found a plausible pretext for continuing so disgraceful a practice; if you had not fixed your affections on a young man, whose friends, if he had any, could not fail to disapprove it; and if Jews could have been found to advance money on your present prospects.

I trembled no more. Just though the accusation were, it roused my courage. I calmly and steadily replied, I have to thank your claim, Sir, and the love of Mr. Montgomery, that spared me the trial: for I have always feared that, having once been culpable, it was easy to be so again.

I like your candour. I do not wish to detract from your merit. I even acquit you of all interested views, by believing that you might imagine you had some title to the Montgomery estate, and were willing, in case it should be awarded to you, to share it with my son; but that idea can exist no longer: you must have been informed that not a doubt of my right remains.

I have been informed that I have not so much ground for hope as was imagined.

Pardon me then if I ask what hopes you can possibly entertain of another kind.

If I believed the love of Mr. Montgomery were founded on the family estate, I could not hope for one, unless I were to possess the other.

Ah! too well you know that is not the case! Too well you know the headstrong, disobedient boy, in defiance of parental advice and authority, is prepared to run every risque for your sake! But what those risques are you will shudder to think, when I tell you that, while I live, he will have nothing but his commission. Were he to marry a young woman who had kept within the bounds of propriety, though she were destitute of fortune, I might consent;

as the family estate will place us in affluence: but one that is worse than destitute; that owes large sums of money; debts contracted in a scandalous manner, to satisfy the clamours raised by dissipation and profusion; that is imprudent, to give it no worse a term, both by inheritance and example; it is not possible I should sanction such an alliance! I have been told that Lady Montgomery used the most unjustifiable deceit to draw in Mr. Winterdale; and that she was deeply in debt, as well as yourself. I do not say that children necessarily resemble their parents (No, thought I; if they did, I should never have loved your son) but that they generally do, in mind, as well as person, is a fact; to say nothing of the certain effects of example on one side, and imitation on the other.

Sir, said I, I hear you with deep humiliation; because your reflections, though very cutting, are just, I have deserved them all except one; which is the conclusion you draw of my duplicity from that of my mother. Mr. Montgomery must have told you that, in the first moment of the declaration of his love, I declared my folly. Agonizing, though it were, I did not spare myself. I had, before, endeavoured, though without success, to prevail upon my mother to pursue the same line of conduct, with regard to Mr. Winterdale. In all other points, I see my error with as much abhorrence as yourself. I have suffered bitter anguish for it; and I am sensible that all I have to trust to, for your good opinion, as well as that of the rest of the world, is the future. This is so uncertain a foundation, that it does not become me to make professions and promises; but I hope I shall not be thought the less determined because I am afraid to do so.

By no means, replied Sir James: I would the rather trust you if, added he, after a moment's pause, your caution were not dictated by your present conduct, as well as the past.

I do not understand you, Sir, said I.

I am almost ashamed to explain myself. I do not permit servants to repeat their idle stories to me; much less do I ever make enquiries of them; but what passed in the kitchen of the inn, last night, appeared to my man so extraordinary, that, as it regarded a young lady of my own name, he took the liberty to tell me of it this morning. Sir James stopped.

Proceed, Sir, if you please. I have not the most distant idea of what you allude to.

It seems that two men, one the servant of Sir Edward Halifax, the other of Colonel Sunderland, each asserted that Miss Montgomery was going to be married to his master. The latter said every thing was settled between you; his master had set off for his regiment; and was to meet you at Winterdale, on your return to that place, and make you his bride. The other said his master was still here, and with you every hour of the day; and that the marriage between him and yourself was to take place before you left Aberystwith, The men grew warm; accused each other of lying; and, at length came to blows. The master of the house, alarmed by the disturbance, entered the kitchen and parted them; and understanding the cause of the quarrel said, 'You are a couple of fools. I suppose the lady has given encouragement to both your masters; for they have both been dangling after her ever since they came here: but it is said she is a great heiress; and, most likely some other dog will run away with the bone.' A simple−looking fellow, a servant of Mr. Winterdale then said, 'he knew that to be true; for there was one 'Squire Montgomery stood the best chance.'

Sir, said I, finding Sir James had ended, this is more than I deserve. My first errors were the effects of thoughtlessness; but I soon found they were not to be committed with impunity. I found the Almighty Maker of my frame had placed a monitor in my bosom, whose reproaches were intolerable, and who was roused by every person I conversed with. Unable to bear its tortures, I formed the resolution to consult it in every future action of my life, and to be guided by its dictates. My conscience has acquitted me, with regard to the two gentlemen you have mentioned; but I never once reflected that I was responsible to the master of every inn, and to every servant who drank a can of beer in his kitchen.

Allow me to say, then, that you did not reflect justly. We are responsible for our conduct to every one of our fellow−creatures. There is not one, who knows, or has heard of us, but constitutes himself a judge of our actions; and though their ideas, taken collectively, are generally carried too far, they are seldom ill−founded.

I see it; I see it, Sir, said I, I have committed another error. Satisfied with not deceiving the gentlemen in question, I have deceived the mass of mankind, and led them into an opinion injurious to delicacy, and my affection for Mr. Montgomery. But Sir, as you have named these gentlemen, will you permit me to relate what has passed between them and me?

As I am not interested in it, I will not give you that trouble.

Have the goodness to allow me to tell you, in as few words, as I can. As you have heard one part of the truth, candour requires you, Sir, to hear the other. Unfortunately for me, truth and falsehood are so blended in the relation you have heard, that perhaps I may not be able to separate them, without leaving some suspicion behind. Both these gentlemen addressed me; and both solicited my hand. My fortune was so evidently the object of the colonel that I had only to tell him it was in litigation, to silence him; and that it was almost hopeless, to make him leave the place without seeing me. The attachment of Sir Edward appears more sincere. The former suspence and present danger of my fortune have made no impression on him; but I have put an end to every hope he might have entertained as a lover; and he is now upon the footing of a friend; not to me only, but to the family. He is deserving of our friendship; and his person, good qualities, and disinterestedness are such that, had I never known Mr. Montgomery, it is possible he might have been something more.

It was not my intention, when I came, rejoined Sir James, to have mentioned any thing derived from so dishonourable a source as the tattle of servants. I was led to it unawares; and I am not sorry I was; since what you have now said, respecting Sir Edward Halifax, gives me hopes that the real object of my seeking this interview may not be unacceptable to you. Though my gratitude for the service I received from Lady Winterdale is not lessened by knowing to whom it is due; I will frankly own I would have exposed myself and Lady Montgomery to the whole of the storm, rather than have profited by her kindness; had I known it at the time. Chance having unavoidably thrown me in your way, however, I thought I would make a proposal, which appears to me too advantageous to be rejected. I understand you correspond with Mr. Montgomery; you therefore know that all my endeavours to make him give up his pretensions to you have been fruitless. I now address myself to you. Though there is an appearance of openness and sincerity in your manner which I admire, past improprieties have made too deep an impression on my mind to be eradicated. That the decree of the Lord Chancellor will be against you has never been doubted by me, and is now clear to every other person. What then remains for you, but beggary and imprisonment these are harsh words, Miss Montgomery, and painful to utter, but I must not disguise the truth beggary and imprisonment, if you continue single. If you marry my son, you share the beggary, and the imprisonment is his!

My eyes were fixed upon those of Sir James, I suppose, with an expression of horror. I could not speak. He went on.

The way to escape all this is now open to you; and such a way as you acknowledge you might have chosen, if you had not known my son. Relinquish him. Give me your word you will never see him more; or write to him, except to tell him your unalterable resolution. Marry Sir Edward Halifax; and I will settle with your Jews, and send you their bonds.

I remained speechless and motionless for some time; and Sir James looked at me with an eye not devoid of compassion. At length I recovered my faculties and answered, Never, Sir! If all the evils and punishments you could assemble were placed on one hand, and all the pleasures and gratifications you could name on the other; the one could not terrify, or the other bribe me to give up Montgomery. No, I will meet the consequences of my fault; a fault sufficiently repented of, if not atoned for. If your son deserts me, I will submit to my fate: if he does not, I

hope I shall never consign him to a prison to keep myself out of it. My voice faltered during the latter part of this sentence; the idea of Montgomery in a prison overcame me; and I burst into tears.

Sir James seemed affected. I have made the experiment, however, said he; if I cannot succeed it is not my fault. He then hurried out of the room.

In what unknown, unthought of horrid shape is this transgression of mine to appear to me in future! I had hitherto considered it only as placing a temporary obstacle between me and Montgomery; a barrier which would be removed when I came of age. The only question appeared to me which should bestow the fortune. I saw not the unrelenting father, who stood between him and the possession of it. Now, it seems, I cannot be the wife of Montgomery, without subjecting him to a prison! Well might such a cruel contingency not enter my mind; for I cannot comprehend how it could ever find a place in the breast of a parent.

Never, Montgomery, will I bring you into such a hazard. Never will I marry you, till the estate is yours I was going to say, yours, or mine; but the latter is a hope that must be banished for ever. If your love be of the same durable texture as my own, I will wait for you till my shining dark ringlets are sprinkled with grey; and I will not murmur, or harbour one uneasy thought; except as to the effect their change of colour may produce upon you. If it cannot stand the trial which is prepared for us, Go leave me to my fate.

I could live upon a little, Harriet; upon a bason of milk for the first and last meal of the day, and a morsel of meat for my dinner: I could live in a cottage; not what modern luxury denominates a cottage; but the habitation of a labouring man: but, I have examined my powers, and I find I could not, by any means, procure these things for myself. Here, then, will I rest. The infinitely good and wise Being which formed me, has given me limited faculties, and these I will exert to the utmost. More cannot be required of me, and all beyond I will trust to his gracious care to provide.

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 50. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Aberystwith Oct. 24, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

My last letter from Montgomery is full of tenderness, and impatience to call me his; but does not mention the visit of his father; of which he is probably uninformed. He repeats his intreaties that I will elope with him. He conjures me, by every claim he has upon my affections, to consent immediately; and says, this opportunity neglected, his mind forebodes it will not return. Ah! Montgomery, you have heard my cause is hopeless, though your delicacy does not allow you to tell me so; and you wish to shelter me against the coming storm.

Grateful to my heart is your love and generosity; but they shall not expose you to perils, which, though I could call by name in my last letter, my pen now refuses to trace.

I have told Montgomery all that passed between his father and myself; but my resolution not to involve him in my evil destiny, and to be his, when I can without danger to himself, I have not mentioned; for I will make him no promises, any more than Sir James. I always regarded promises as sacred things, and feared to make them, lest circumstances might occur which might render it ineligible to keep them: but I begin to think they should almost be dismissed from our intercourse with each other. If my sense of duty and propriety do not alter, I am bound to adhere to it, without a promise, which is, then, unnecessary: if it do, I ought to change as my conviction changes, and my promise is worse than unnecessary; for it compels me to do wrong, before I can do right. It is enough that

Montgomery will see my love for him has undergone no alteration from this interview with his father.

I have profited so far by Sir James's lesson, that I have never since been seen with Sir Edward Halifax. When he is here, my behaviour is what it was, because I am convinced I cannot mend it; but, in compliment to that world, to which I have been taught I am accountable, I deprive myself of the exercise of walking, when that gentleman is of the party, or when we are likely to meet him. He perceives it, and looks dejected; but does not complain. Indeed he could not complain; for no expectation of his do I disappoint.

Henry and Eleanor are not quite so happy as when I mentioned them last; which is only saying they are human; for humanity must pay some appropriate tax for such felicity as theirs. She is the loadstone that has drawn Frank Elrington hither; and he is a most unwelcome intruder to both. Henry has nothing to fear from him; and I believe he thinks so, when he listens to reason; but love is stronger than reason, and often refuses to be guided by its dictates. Watchfulness and suspicion have introduced themselves into the party. The gentlemen are beset by these; while Eleanor is under the dominion of fear and restraint; the fear of giving pain to one; and caution, lest she should either offend or encourage the other.

Mr. Sharp has discovered a rival in Frank Elrington, though he has never suspected Henry. His behaviour is truly ludicrous on the occasion. Sometimes he affects to whimper, and calls her to account, as if she were responsible to him for every word and action: at others, he relies upon his fortune, and what he terms his *natteral* acquirements and believes himself still sure of his prize.

What the mild and yielding temper of Mrs. Elrington could not accomplish the flight of the son and heir of the foxhunter has brought about. The whole family has followed him to Aberystwith. The father is not without his watchfulness and suspicions too; and they it were, I fancy, that brought him here; as it is said he is governed by the same views in the marriage of his son which directed him in his own riches. He has a lady in his eye, to whom the son has been introduced, and to whom he made no objection, till his acquaintance with Eleanor. She has four times her merit; that is, her fortune is four times as large. Mrs. Elrington is a most interesting companion. In the words of the song, she has Sense and sweetness join'd: and nobody can help loving her but her husband.

The Misses, on their arrival, found as much fault with Aberystwith, as Mrs. Thacker, on our first acquaintance, did with Winterdale Horrid! Shocking! Abominable! Not a creature to be seen! As soon as they had seen Sir Edward Halifax, however, they changed their opinion; and, from that moment, they saw nothing else. But their everlasting competition would prove fatal to their projects, if their eagerness did not. If I had a sister, and considered only the policy of the thing, I would sometimes lye by, and let her shine alone. I should then, probably, either be taken for my modesty; or she would be taken out of my way. A continual strife for admiration must divide it if, indeed, both candidates are not equally despised.

I know, at this moment, in the north, five single sisters; and so they are likely to remain, from the adoption of this very plan of the Misses Elrington. Their persons are handsome; their manners not disagreeable; their dress genteel; their fortunes small; and their years, alas! from twenty−eight to forty. Formidable was this number for a single man to attack, and few there were who dared to do it. All at home, and every mouth open at once; if a male visitor directed his discourse to one, another was not satisfied till she had turned its channel towards herself. The third succeeded in depriving the second of the gentleman's attention; and the fourth was equally successful over the third; so that no poor man could ever tell where to fix his choice.

Adieu. The Montgomery cause comes on immediately; and we shall hear the decision at home. I am one of the blessed of Pope; for, as I expect nothing, I shall not be disappointed.

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

As I was folding up my last letter, Eleanor entered our dressing−room, and I put it into her hands, to read. Well, Eleanor, said I, when she had finished, what do you think of my resolution never to have Montgomery till he is rich; and to wait till that time for him, if he will permit me?

Ah! Charlotte, replied she, while a tear stole gently down her cheek, I admire your resolution; but when you talked of a cottage and a bason of milk, you forgot *me*?

Letter 51. TO MUSTER WILYAM MENDEALL

Aburisty Hock to bear, 1812

Revurunt Sur,

I rites this to lett you to no that threw Gods blessin I be in good yelth at this prisent, an hesier in mynde than wan I rot afore, blesid by God for it. Us be a leving this plase sun, and I hops as how I be bothe wysur an bettr for mi travveals. All the nus I do no be as us had lik to ha had mishtif, and I ool tel yo the y and the were four. I was behint owr carrige a goin a hareing ovr this conshumit dissolute cuntry, an it powrd down as uf heven an yarth was coming tigether, an wot shold us mit bot a carige brock down, an not abel to stur a fut; an it thonderd an litund lik the dy o jugment. An so thar wos a gud lik gentelman an lady a letel in yeres, an ther thy stood, lik stock fishes, ovr the brockin down carrig. An so mi lady calld to me to gett doun, an hacks um to com into owr coach, an thy simd myty thancfull, an myty hobleeged to me, an so thy comd in. But uf I wos to gee yo sevn yere yo nevr cold gess wot old nic had sent us. hoo shold it be but Sur jams mundgumbury an is lady, that be pying the lyars to get um our poore swete mis mundgumbrys estate. Uf I ad bin wurthi to none it, thy shold ha bin wat to the skyn on um, afour as id a hard mi lady. An so us tuck um to Aberisty, an sot um down at the taubut. But muster mendill, being as how yo has not travild in walls, mappen yo does not no wot a tawbut be, an so I ool insense yo. It be, for all the whirld lik a dog of a hownd, uth brod slowch eres an a curly tyle; only a stid o being wite uth black an brown blonchis, it be all over yaller, lik goold. But as I nevr sid no dogs o that caller in wals, it be lik the pynter put that on for nothin. An I thot sur jams luckt a letel bit sulky wan us sot him down. An at nite, as I was a sittin at the taubot, a drinkin a pot o lunnon pore tar, uth sur yethad Allifacks man, that skowndril kernals valet bigun on him and sad as how is mastr ood hay mis mundgumberry. Cur Yethuds man sad it wos Cur Yethad as was to hay hur, an at last, thy fit. I sid Sur jams mundgumbrys vallet us lying his heres to the tabel, an I thot I ood set all strate at wuns; an I sad sas I, I nos bettr nor that; for it be squir mundgumbery as be to hav hur: howse'vr I supose he did not bileve me; for neckst mornin sur jams comd to hour hows, an calld pure mis mundgumbory ovr the coles, for being fals hartid to his sun; an he sot hur a crying, an thre toned to send har to bottomry by for pargery. Thy ma wel strive for hur; for hur be the swetist crater that evr the son shon on: bot sur jams nid not a bin so hoar anbuff houtray goose, for hur do lov the verry grownd is son do walk on. I has sin hur culler com an goo, an com an goo, wan hur ha sin him; an I dos no bi miself wot it be, an wot a nashon uprore I do fil, wan mi coller do com an goo for jinny.

I has had a torn uth the methodys, but rite or rung I be got clere on um. A mon wus parged upon a stul in the town strit, an macking a hujus nise, an a grate crowd o peepel wus all abowt him, an so I want an mad won amungs um; bot hit was all won as the porich chorch; for I cold mack nyther topp nor tyle on it. an som thy cryd, an som thy sobid, an som thy groned, an som beeted ther bossorns; an I thot to miself, Laudamity, wot fewls yo be, to mind all this here nise, an nevr a wurd spocken; for I cold not eckstingish so much as a, b, c; an so I lofed at um. An so the parcon ficksit is II on me as uf he ood a betten me, an he crid owt, as plane, as evr I cold ha spocken miself, An thow, sinfull sinner as thow bist, God do call the to repentens an a nuw life. Crist do bid me call to the to fourseck thy evle wys, an foller him. Gosh! it strook me al on a hepe, and I nevr mad no anser; but I stool awy, an went wam, an I sot me down an considerrd. I nod as God had called me to repentens; for I sorely repentid plying at wisk, uth them ther himps of the devle, an lowsing fore pund thre an sickspens; an more nor that I nod as I ripentid, raflein for the wach; an I thot for sartin the parson mut ha bin towid on it by God his self, becase wy?

noboddy els nod on it, saveing, an ecksepting yu, an the old un. an has to foor seeking sich evle wys, I did not want crist to bid me; for I was fooly ficksid nevr to ply at wisk no moor. How I mut foller crist, I could nut no wys find out, an I thot I hood goo to the parsin an hacks; but I thot I hood jest cry a litel furst, to let him se as I reppentid, and I sot me down utha sarvents hall, an cryd as well as evr I cold; an has luck ood hav it, my mastr comd in wan I wos in the middist on it, an he sid me a crying, an he bid me com into the drauin rum, an he hackst me wot wus the mattr; an mi lady wus by, an I wus a letel shy o speking; but at last I brok owt afresh, an cryd an towid um, as the parson had fownd me out; and I was a pure sinfull sinner, and I was a gooin to foller crist; an so thy got it all out on me. An mi lady sed as I wus o the rite sort o stoff to mack a methody on: an mastr sed as no mon cold sarv tew mastrs, an uf I follered jesus I shold nat foller him; so I mut tack mi chice. An so I considderd, and thot as praps I mit not mend mi plaise, an id ene be as I was. If I has don rung, God forgee me. But I gan um a luk a tym or tew, ater mastr four waund me, wen I hard um a tawking cristen lingo; an mappen I can se as for as a wysur mon, wan I do set mi witts to wurk, to eggs ham in the natur o things; an wons the pairson had a yuge mind to be kworrilsom, an ficght old nic; fur he rabbit his honds, an spittid on um, an tuck up his bybill, an holdid it up, as uf so be hid a throed it amungs us, an now, sas he, I hool hay a bout uth the devvle, and I nos I shall beet him.

An then he tould us as how a haputh o borm hood mack twenti lite domplins, an a haputh o God hood mack twenti lite soles. Now he shonna mak me bileve as a hapoth o borm ool mak twenti lite domplins; fer I nos our red lyin misser to well; an I do kweshton wother it hood mack ten; for us offens had um, wan mastr wos mastr. An as for a hapurth o God, furst an formust I dos nat thinck as they cold sell so small a mater, seein as how he be mad o sich pretchus stuf; an second an seckondly, I dos nat thinck as how they cold sell him at hall; for he be evri boddis God, an heven poore carlos God for nothin. An then I hard a ooman methody as do com out o yorksheer; an bit ween yo, an me, an the post, I thot hur wus a letel bit ondacent. Hur spred out hur horms, an hur turnd up hur hys, an hur cryd, jesus, cum doon, nakid as ta is, an dunnot stey to don thyself. So I dos sup hose that wile the men dos foller criste, the wimin dos mit him, to mak suer; but I thincks thy mat giv him tim to put his britchis on. An so dere muster mendal, no moor at this time; but may us all mit uth jy an plessure at winturdeal hall now, and in the blesfull and evvrlastin prisons of hour red hemer and saver heararter.

Yures to commend,

RALPH RUSSETTING.

Letter 52. TO RAFE RUSSETTING

Winterdale, October 24, 1812.

Dere Rafe,

You knows that I am not hobligated to take no notice on you, being as you is not one of the hooper sarvants, sich as me and Muster Mendall, and I may say, Misses Orton and Missis Robbison; but as you has allwiss been a gain young man; and more hover has lived with us wen I was not quit so big as I be now, tho I was never no less than house skipper, I will lett you into the light of what is going forrad here; for, as I says somtimes, wisdum and nolleg be littel worth, if one do not tell them to somboddy. Now, as every boddy hear knows the news, and as I knows nohoddy that is not hear, but you; in coarse I must tell it to you, if I tells it at hall. And so, Rafe, I must tell you that you will not know Winterdale Hall, when you comes back. We has all sorts of wurkmen a turning the house out at the windoors. Menny a pretty mess I has with them, to be shure! I be arter Jinney night and day, to make her keep things a letell desent; but the men be so rubbitching, and hur be so ontidy, that God he knows I has enof to do. I has ofens wunderd, Rafe, how you could be so besotted and bewhiched, and befooled with that slut! You might stoop down, and pike up nothin anny time; but you might a hopend your eyes, and a seen her betters, without gooing the tenth o your nose: but that is nyther hear nor thear.

My lady did not choos to leave hur ordurs with Muster Mendall, afeard master should make sowr facis, and thay should get him hanger; and so she ordured me to get the paneters and wite whashers all hover the house, the verry minnitt as I seed the backs on um, and acquordinly I did. But thay had no sunner sett thare brushes to work, than us seed a pose shayes drive up the park, and stop at the door; and a verry fine gentelman got out on it. Robbud run to hope in the door, and I stood in the hall, to resepshon him; and made him one of my best curkeys. Sur says I, I be verry sorey, but all the fammerley am out, and there be nobody at home but Mr. Mendall and me and the sarvants. Verry well, Misis Wochecalt, says he, I has my instrukshons, and I can heat with you and Muster Mendall. I shall not be hear more than too days. I starred like a throatteled catt, and made a hunderd hopoligis, about hentertaning sich a grand strangur: and, at last, woldst thee beleeve it, Rafe, he turned out to be nothing but a polestur, from Lundon. And so he dind in my rum; and then he miserd and wrot down, and drunk tay and supt; and the necks day he hot and drunk, and miserd agen, till heed misserd his fill; and the necks morning he tuck himself hoff, in another pos shays. Im shure he gen twise the trubull that our good Muster Henry do, when he be at hoame. In about a wick, the Lord be good unto us, I thinks e my sole he louded thre Lundun waggings, there come sich a passil o things; and too men come down, and sot to wurk, like mad, and pooled down one thing, and put up anuther, till I be ommost by side myself, and does not kno wich away to turn me. I sees a thing, with a head and fase at top, and a piller and post at bottom, and I says, What's this? Why, says thay, it be a spinks. Im shure I shud never reccoleckshon it, if it was not for the pinks in the gardin; tho you knos that sens I has been housskiper in a grate fammerly, and sosiated with ladys maids, I has made some leetel purfishes in hard wurds. Then I sees a pritty light thre leggit stool, and I says, Whats that? Why, says thay, it be a tripe pot. That, to be sure, I can remembeer; tho I should think it more propperer to nomminashon it a tripe tabul. But I has been a thinking, Rafe, whot master will say to hall this. My lady be a verry good lady, and Ile praise the brich that carrys me safe hover; but I shold be sadley afeared to stand in hur shoos. Here,I that is but a sarvant, I can not abear to see the thick, ritch, silck damarsk curtings that I has tane sich care on, pooled down, and throed uppon the ground: and I cryd when I sid the grand, heavvy old cheers, guilded hall over with sollid goold, knoked about, like so many shives off a corn stack. I am shure I loved them curtings so well, that I never letten the son of heaven tuch um; for feard he shold spile the coulour; but allwiss kep the shooters two, winter and summer, and I never, upo no akwount laid a finger on the cheers, without a clean douster under it. And if I was so admurashon o the pure things, only by cause I had the looking artur um, what must master be, that has been brot up with um, as a boddy may say? for thay was parfit new when is father was marrid; and so thay be much about his own age. If I was a going to be houskipper on my own bottom, Id try if I cold not beg um o the master; for I be shure I shold tay better care on um, than them nasty pole stars; but tho I has mony ennuf to kip house a miself, I has not yit fixed upon never a young man to kip me company; but, as I say, thats nyther here nor there. And so, Rafe, I hops you will continy to be ruddy and willing, and hobseekus, and you may be ashured of my continence, and feaver, and frenchip, which is all at present from

Your trewly affacshonat frand,

MARTHA STABLE.

Letter 53. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Nov. 1, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

We arrived here last Wednesday; the Elringtons and Mr. Sharp leaving Aberystwith when we did. Sir Edward Halifax left the day before. A subject so much nearer my heart will scarcely let me stay to tell you that the latter gentleman took an opportunity to ask if I would grant him a ray of hope, and allow him to see me at Winterdale; I replied that his company must always be acceptable at Winterdale; but I begged that the only condition annexed to his visits might be not to hope. He was going to make some remonstrance, when I put a stop to all, by

informing him of my engagement to Montgomery. He shook my hand in silence, and I saw him no more. Now to the subject which occupies every thought.

Yesterday I received a letter, with the post mark of the next town, containing these words.

I shall be with you at five o'clock. If possible, let me find only Eleanor with you; as I wish for no other witness of the conversation which may pass between you and

Your

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

O, Harriet, how did my heart beat, to find Montgomery so near! to find that three hours would bring him before me! and how did I weary myself with conjectures respecting that conversation which every sound of my watch brought one moment nearer. Was he coming to urge me to elope with him? I was resolved not to consent. Terrified by the menaces of his father, was he coming to give me up? I could not bear it. I shewed the letter to my mother, who called me a simpleton, for feelings I could not disguise. I sat down to table; but nothing could I eat.

The moment the cloth was drawn Eleanor and I left the room! my mother soon followed us to our drawing room; and, having given orders that Montgomery should be shewn up there, she left us to ourselves. I dared not go near a window, to see him approach, but sat at a distance, in a state of agitation I cannot describe. Eleanor, less interested, watched for him. I knew by her looks, she saw him; but I had not power to ask her, and she did not speak. I heard the door open and shut; I heard his foot upon the stairs; and I was in his arms.

My Charlotte, said he after a few moments, we part no more!

Have you seen your father? asked I, in a tremulous voice. And does he say we part no more?

I have seen him, replied Montgomery; but I have not his sanction for coming hither.

Then wherefore are you come?

To persuade you to be mine; and then let fortune do her worst.

Alas! said I, you know that I should send you to a prison; immure you within strong walls; that you could only see the light of heaven between iron bars! My lips quivered as I spoke, and I burst into tears.

Impossible! My father is not a barbarian

But he told me this himself.

I know he did. I know he urged so monstrous an argument, to prevail upon you to renounce me. But, do you think he would put his threats in execution? Though not an indulgent parent, he is not tyrannical; he is not unjust; and, if he were, do you think it possible he should let his son languish in a prison, while he revelled in a fortune, which, by equity and natural right, belonged to his son's wife; and therefore ought to be responsible for her debts.

I have no other reason to think so than his own positive assurance.

Mere words to frighten you! If he were capable of such barbarity, do you think he would dare to practise it? How could he look the world in the face? that world, to which, he told you, you were accountable, when you

innocently smiled upon one man, while you professed to love another? Would not a monster be hunted from society, who despoiled a young woman of her patrimony under the sanction of the law; endeavoured by threats and bribes, to shake her fidelity to his son; and finding them fruitless, suffered his son to starve in bondage, because he married her? it could not be. Believe me, my love, it was a stratagem. It was making a decoy of the best feelings of your nature, love and generosity, to entice you to do wrong.

There was an energy, a rapidity in the manner of Montgomery which almost overcame my reason. I exclaimed, O, that it were no more! we might yet be happy! But, recollecting myself, I added, Sir James, himself, told me that his prejudices against me could never be eradicated.

If there is a mind so deaf to reason, so blind to truth, as to harbour prejudices never to be eradicated; is such a mind fit to govern other minds? The very structure of it, would render it unfit, and absolve us from our obedience. But my father's is not such; though so represented by himself. He admires your openness, your candour; nay, even your constancy; though his sole purpose, in addressing you, was to vanquish it. He was guarded in his expressions, when he informed me of the visit he had made you; yet his relation of what had passed was more in your favour than your own.

But he made no concessions with regard to admitting me into his family, did he?

He did not; and therefore am I come. As sure as I am that his prejudices were not, at first, without some foundation; so sure I am that they have none, at present, and that he will be convinced of it. If he cannot trust a young creature, not habituated to error, but for once drawn into it; whose innate ideas of right and wrong discovered it to herself; whose feelings revolted against it; whose ingenuousness confessed it; whose dread of it is a security for the future; and whose very diffidence makes the reliance stronger become his daughter. Force his prejudices to fly before you; and let the knowledge of what you are banish from my father's breast the idea of what you have been.

Montgomery, you furnish me with arms against yourself. I will admit what you say of me; for I feel I am such as you describe; but Sir James ought to be convinced of it before, not after, I am his daughter. If he cannot trust me now, what can he have to trust? Time, which will alter every feature of my face, may change every purpose of my heart.

Never, said Montgomery, unless your perception of right and wrong be obliterated. But how is my father to form a correct opinion of you, if you do not consent to be mine? In what other character than that of his son's wife can you approach him? In what other way give him an opportunity of retracting his errors?

I see none, said I, with a sigh. I must trust to time.

My Charlotte, said Montgomery, you know not what hangs over your head. I dread to mention it; lest what might prevail upon another should make you still more unwilling to consent. Be satisfied to know that *this* is the time, and that every succeeding one will be less auspicious. The chaise that brought me is at the gate. I must go; for I have, with difficulty, obtained a short leave of absence: let me intreat you, by every hope of future happiness, to go with me. Acquaint Lady Winterdale with your intention. She will not oppose it. Perhaps our sweet cousin Eleanor will not desert her friend, on such an occasion; or, if that be too much to ask, she may lend you Mrs. Robinson. I have travelled night and day without stopping, except to change horses, to give us time to reach Scotland, before I must join the regiment. Happiness is before you, Charlotte; if the most faithful Love, the most tender friendship; to my latest breath, and the esteem and admiration of my father, can constitute your happiness. Do not cast it from you, for want of resolution. Believe me, when I assure you that it will never be so easily attainable as now.

Montgomery, said I, I should not want resolution to act according to your wishes, if I were convinced they were right. Possibly, my own second them, and my resolution may be called forth to refuse you. But I was determined against an elopement, before the visit of Sir James. I had suffered too severely from concealment, ever to take another step that should require it; and was resolved to wait till I was deemed capable of making my own choice, and free to acknowledge it.

But, said Montgomery, interrupting me, do you apprehend that a few months will make a difference in your choice? When you have passed the magic stroke of twenty−one, do you expect to find faults in me, that shall render me unworthy of your love?

I hope I shall not live so see that day, be it near or distant, said I.

Then, to a mind like yours, my beloved Charlotte, is the Tweed the boundary of right and wrong? and shall we reject our happiness because we chance to live on that side of the river where happiness is not according to law? I revere the laws of my country; but they were made by man, and therefore are not permanent. One may make you destitute, by stripping you of your just inheritance; another may prevent you from chasing your partner for life, till new obstacles arise between you and the favoured object. It is evident that the empire was divided on the expediency of the latter law; or it would have prevailed in Scotland, as well as here. Scotland is the native country of our family, and, in this case, we have been wiser than our southern countrymen.

I cannot argue with you, said I. The thing may be right in itself; but custom, and the very manner of it have made it wrong. I never could have done it, without self reproach; and, after the frightful picture Sir James has drawn, it is impossible.

Then, said Montgomery, with a deep sigh, I must draw a frightful picture in my turn, which I wished to have been spared.

I will spare you. Sir James's threats were not imaginary. I know I am to lose my cause, and I know the rest.

Then, my dear Charlotte, said Montgomery, fixing his eyes mournfully upon me, where, and how can you live? We cannot expect my father to be more conciliating when the estate is actually his than now. We cannot suppose he would be more likely to redeem you from imprisonment than his son.

I know it all, said I; but little should I love you, and ill deserve your love, if I transferred my personal danger to you; if I trusted to the workings of parental affection in the bosom of a man who has openly declared he will not listen to them. Did I possess any faculties which might set me free, I would exercise them to their utmost limits; patience should make my task light, and perseverance insure its accomplishment. But these are idle thoughts: I cannot even provide the bread I must eat. My plan, however, is formed. Before I come of age I will retire to some obscure cottage, at a distance, perhaps, in the north. There, in safety from the miseries which would attend me, if discovered, will I associate with the good wives and daughters of the village. They are cast in the same mould with myself; the ouly difference between us is that they are rough from the mould, while I have undergone a polishing. I will eat their oaten bread, wear the wool of their flocks, and sleep upon the chaff of their grain. I will learn to spin and knit as they do; and the little I can earn will be made sufficient for my existence, by my mother, if she be spared to me; and if not, by Eleanor.

I felt an unusual animation as I spoke. When I had ended, I observed tears trickling down the cheek of my cousin, while the countenance of Montgomery betrayed an undescribable emotion. At length, he exclaimed, Romantic Charlotte! Is it for this you sacrifice me?

This I will do, replied I; not from romance; for few young women have less in their composition than I; but this is the natural level to which my folly has reduced me, and here I will abide. I have a spirit that will bend to

my situation. When I fell from the splendor of the great world to the solitude of a lonely lodge I benefitted by the change; and when I shall sink to the obscurity of a cottage, I may not be the less deserving of your esteem.

You will, if possible, be more so, returned Montgomery; but if you loved like me you could not treat our final separation so lightly.

I do not treat it lightly. I do not feel it lightly. I have need of all my resolution to carry me through it. But, my friend, continued I, holding out my hand, it depends upon yourself whether our separation shall be final, or only temporary. henever you are a rich man, I believe I shall not refuse you.

Charlotte, my dear Charlotte, said Montgomery, pressing my hand to his lips, do not place me in such a cruel situation as I will not say to wish the death of my father; for that is too horrid, to impious a sentiment to enter my breast but, to look forward to that period for my own happiness. Let nothing, I beseech you, come across my prayers for his life, which might lessen their fervency.

Filial duty and affection will be your security.

And what shall be my security that you will be mine at a time so uncertain? perhaps so distant?

My affection if it do not change. I will not marry another man; unless I love him more than you.

Ah! Charlotte! why are you not serious on such a subject?

I am more serious than you imagine. You shall judge of the future by the past and the present. I have not had a thought of happiness that has not been associated with your idea, since you first declared your love; and, if I own the whole truth, for some time before. I would sacrifice every thing for you; but my duty. If I were my own mistress, and did not drag after me the weight of this unfortunate debt, I would share your pittance were it ever so small. I would teach my hands to milk cows, and make butter and cheese; while you sowed, and reaped, and gathered into barns; if necessity would have it so; and at night I would boil the pot, or toast the rasher, and sweep the hearth, against you came home. I would almost carry your knapsack do any thing but starve. I will not promise to continue in the same mind, because my mind is not in my power, any more than my features or my stature; and, if it were, I should rather chuse you owed my compliance to my inclination than my bond. But, I have nothing within me that tells me I am likely to change. I loved Eleanor when I was four years old. Ask her if I do not love her still.

My dear Charlotte, said Montgomery, your sentiments impress me with admiration; almost with reverence. Still I must think you romantic.

As romantic as you please, then, said I; but I have not yet been variable.

Well, since you will have it so, I submit. Where I came resolved to conquer I yield.

That many a tall fellow in a red coat has done before.

I love your vivacity better than any thing, except your sensibility. But, my love, you will inform me of your retreat, and allow me to soften its inconveniences: to embellish it. You will allow me still to endeavour to convince my father of your merit; and see you, from time to time, to acquaint you with the progress I may make.

No embellishment whatever. It is my business not to be noticed. With regard to Sir James's better opinion of me, may you seek to obtain it, and may heaven prosper your endeavours! Bring me the best tidings you can. I am not so fond of homespun woollen as to prefer it to muslin and sarsnet; or so much attached to the company of farmers'

wives and daughters as to prefer it to yours.

But, my Charlotte, wherever yon go there may be a Henry Winterdale; and such a person, and such accomplishments, as yours cannot long be hidden.

I did not think of that, said I, gravely.

You know I can be jealous.

I do; and as I have a notion I shall not be afraid of your scrutiny, I allow you to be as jealous as you please. I should doubt your love if you were not alive to every possibility of losing me. To obviate the chance of that misfortune, chuse my retreat yourself; and take especial care there be no Henry Winterdale in it, or near it, and, if you can, that none ever pass through it,

Such conduct as yours must find its way, at once, to my father's heart; to any heart not made of stone! What needs there more than this voluntary exile, to shew him what you are capable of.

If it were voluntary; if the fear of these hateful Jews did not drive me; I might assume some merit in renouncing the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; but I am afraid the merit is theirs.

You have renounced the world, and refused Sir Edward Halifax for me; and may I cease to breathe when I forget it.

Mere selfishness, said I; I happened to like you better than both; and did it to please myself.

By such sallies as these did I endeavour to calm the troubled spirit of Montgomery, and withdraw his anxious eye from the time which must elapse before I can be his: a period so uncertain that, considering the general uncertainty of earthly things, it may, probably, never arrive.

My mother now entered the room. Vain were her entreaties, and mine united with them, for Montgomery to stay all night; and equally vain our endeavours to prevail upon him to take some refreshment, when it was brought. At length I put a small piece of sandwich on his plate, and poured out a glass of wine. He ate and drank in haste, and in silence, and, when I would have helped him again, he removed his plate with a slight bow. Then, rising from his seat, he took my hand.

Charlotte, said he, I take Lady Winterdale and Miss Mowbray to witness that you are mine. For our present happiness, I wish the estate of our family could have been proved to belong to you. Not so proud of my choice as now, but with the hope of her generosity and her noble fortune satisfying my father, would I have presented to him my bride. Of that no chance remains; and the happiness of introducing you without it is denied me by yourself. But the day will come if circumstances change his opinion or yours, it may come soon but it must come, that I shall claim you. I trust your heart; though I have not your word.

He kissed my hand, with fervency ; and before Eleanor could ring the bell, he had left the room. My mother and my cousin followed, and left me to my own reflections. I fixed my eyes on the chair Montgomery had quitted; my spirits sunk after the exertion they had made; my heroism and my levity alike forsook me; and, in an agony of grief, I cried, You are gone, and I shall never see you more!

Letter 54. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Nov. 7, 1812.

Happy is it for us mortals, my dear Harriet, who have so much pain interwoven with our pleasures, in this chequered life of ours, that our minds possess an elasticity, which rebounds after pressure. I have a letter from Montgomery, dictated by inestimable affection, which has aided the arguments of reason and the vivacity of youth, perhaps has done more than either, and no longer experience the bitterness of anguish: but I cannot turn a thought towards our last sad parting without a pang I dread to feel.

A scene that passed on our arrival here would once have been the subject of the first letter I had addressed to you; but these men, my Harriet; these men, when they become our lovers, throw all other things behind them.

When we entered the hall at Winterdale, we found it Egyptian! Startled, confounded, and almost without daring to look at it, its unfortunate owner hurried into the eating room, it was Grecian. Terrified and exasperated, he bounced into the drawing−room, it was Chinese. He then took refuge in a small apartment called his study; where he found a few law−books, bound in parchment and rough calf; a desk, to write on; and a stuffed black leather chair, to sleep in, when tired of study or business; in short, found every thing as he left it. What he did there, I know not; but I apprehend the chair was more uneasy than he had ever found it before. To the servant who was sent to summon him to dinner he made no answer. Mendall was the sole repository, of what passed in his mind. He ordered an apartment to be prepared for him, for the night; but, unluckily it happened to be one that her ladyship had thought proper to modernize, and he ran down stairs, frantic, and took up his lodging in the great chair. He breakfasted, as he had dined, alone. Dinner made its appearance, and no Mr. Winterdale. Her ladyship then, thinking he had had some time to digest what was not very palateable, ordered the dinner back, saying, You young people will have no objection to wait half an hour. Mr. Winterdale must either dine with us; or we will dine with him. Come, let us go into his study, and try to change the subject of his meditations.

Henry absolutely declined interrupting his father, and Eleanor earnestly begged to be excused. I was proceeding in the same strain, when my mother insisted upon my accompanying her. What is there in Mr. Winterdale so frightful that you dare not face him? demanded she. Neither he or you have done amiss; and, if I have, I am able to answer it. I followed her; she opened the door of the study, and we saw Mr. Winterdale, leaning his elbow on the table, and his head upon his hand. He raised his head as we entered; and then, without moving a muscle of his countenance, resumed his former position. My mother repeated, O that I were a glove upon that hand; that I might touch that cheek! Indeed, continued Lady Winterdale, finding her apostrophe disregarded, you look so like Juliet, that the quotation from Romeo was irresistible; or I intended to have been very serious, because I am afraid you are so.

Again her ladyship paused. No answer. She went on.

I will not suffer you to mope by yourself in this manner. Charlotte and I cannot dine without you; nor can Henry and Eleanor; though I could not persuade them to come and tell you so. We have sent the dinner back, and all four made a vow of starvation till you will join us.

Here was a fine opportunity for Mr. Winterdale to open. I expected to hear him say, Starve, and be a very naughty word. Still he chose to be silent. My mother seemed at a loss, for a moment. She was prepared for upbraidings and curses; but she hardly knew how to answer a man that would not speak. At length she gently pulled the arm which supported the head; and the face, deprived of its prop, turned towards her, with an expression of mingled grief and anger.

My dear Mr. Winterdale, said my mother, you shall not persist in this obstinate, sulky silence. I have ordered two of your favourite dishes for dinner; you shall go with us into the eating−room; and, if you and I can not accommodate matters without one of our entertaining dialogues, we will begin when the repast is over.

Lady Winterdale, said her husband, I will never eat with you again, till I know to what extent your plans are to be carried; whether there is any point at which you mean to stop; or whether my absolute ruin is resolved

upon.

Now, said my mother, we shall come to a right understanding. We may as well converse half an hour before dinner as after. The stewed carp will not spoil! Take heaven to witness that your ruin is the last thing I think of.

You never thought of your own, or the means to prevent it, till it stared you in the face.

Very true, it came upon me quite unawares.

You are pursuing the course you were before; and the same causes, dress, furniture, equipage, and company, will produce the same effects.

Ah! said her ladyship, one clear, one principal cause is wanting, London. I declare I do not think I could ruin you in the country. In dear, bewitching London it does, indeed, require some resolution not to ruin one's self. But I am so moderate in my wishes, that I never will ask you to take a house in town, if I can help it. I will be satisfied with tolerable lodgings, for only two or three months in the spring.

Lady Winterdale, you confound me. I have formerly given vent to passion and just resentment, in a manner that I thought would have made the boldest tremble; but your ladyship was armed with an impenetrable shield, and all my arrows fell blunted, to the ground. Upon this last provocation I determined to be silent; as I feel I am not your equal. I resolved to bury my griefs in my own bosom, till their measure was accumulated beyond all bearing, and till, like other intolerable burdens, they found their own remedy. But you urge me to speak. Having transformed the mansion of my ancestors into a thing I know not; having made me a stranger at home, and involved me in an inordinate expence in so doing; you hunt me out of my poor little asylum, and out of my leather chair. Mr. Winterdale's voice changed, as he said this; and the tear stole down his cheek.

I pitied him, and could scarcely restrain a respondent drop. Not so my mother; who replied, Propriety altered your house Mr. Winterdale, and affection draws you from your chair. But I am astonished at your attachment to things so indifferent. What is it to you or to me whether the seat we sit upon be leather or velvet, ornamented or plain? Fashion decides these things and he who acts in opposition to her dictates is ridiculous. I saw the necessity of conforming to custom; I knew your prejudices against it; and I saved you the trouble of contradiction, and myself the pain of hearing it. I have no fancy for Chinese furniture and decorations, I hate Egyptian, and I could do very well without Greek; but one must be like other people. If you do not like these things, blame the world that runs mad after them, not me.

If I were allowed to speak my sentiments, rejoined Mr. Winterdale, and stood any chance of being heard, I should observe that the follies of what is called *the world* are no precedent for ours; and that the fancied obligation to be *like other people* has made more sinners than inclination. A higher authority than custom forbids us to follow the multitude to do evil.

I bow to that authority, said my mother, I would make custom arbiter only in things indifferent; such as the form and materials of a sopha, a chair, or a curtain: and I would not suffer these to interfere with a duty a duty I owed my husband. Though for myself, I would rather choose to exhibit other people's follies than my own; yet I have respected your opinions, and even your prejudices. I have not touched this comfortable little room. Here is your chair, the scene of many a quiet nap; here is your well−trodden carpet; and here are your desk and your books. I have done more; for your own apartment has not undergone the slightest change. When you honour it with your presence, you will find the identical bed you have slept in from your cradle; though I believe it was formerly occupied by Japhet and his wife; and the chairs you have sat on ever since you left your nurse's knee; though it requires antediluvian strength to move them. So far am I from being bigotted to modern shapes and stuffs, that I prefer these to all others, when you share them with me.

So sure as I began to state my grievances, so sure was I that your ladyship's reasoning would prove them to be benefits and advantages. It only remains for you to convince me that I am richer for all the sums of money you have expended.

No, replied her ladyship, I shall not attempt that, it is sufficient for me if you are happier; and that you are, let your own feelings, not my reasoning verify. Declare which is the more enviable being, the churlish Mr. Winterdale, secluded from the world, shrinking within his own porcupine−shell, and darting his quills at any unfortunate animal that happened to come within their reach: or the open−hearted, open−handed Mr. Winterdale, surrounded by an affectionate wife, whom he has rescued from misfortune, dutiful and amiable children, Henry was always so, but I may be allowed to call my girls your children, for they regard you as a father in a word, Mr. Winterdale, associating with his fellow−creatures, and dispensing pleasures and benefits to his family and neighbours.

I cannot deny the brilliancy of your ladyship's style and arguments; nor do I deny that you have extended the circle of my enjoyments; but you sell your blessings at a very high price, and most dearly have I paid for them.

You have exchanged imaginary riches for real. You have parted with money that you enjoyed in idea, for wealth that you can see and feel; that you see in the countenance, and feel in the kindness of every mortal that approaches you. What is so delightful in this world as to be loved by every creature in it.

Very delightful, certainly, and I have laid out pretty large sums in this delightful commodity, since I have had the honour of being acquainted with your ladyship: but I own I do not see, in the present instance, how these imitations of foreign trumpery can contribute to my happiness, any more than I see that the money I must pay for them will increase my fortune. Your ladyship does not appear to me to have made these purchases with even *your* usual wisdom.

Every atom of them indispensable, cried my mother. You know I acknowledged just now, that chairs and tables were, in themse1ves, very insignificant matters; but when we are to receive Sir Drapery Classic, Sir Apis Hieroglyphic, and lady Bamboo, I should expire with shame to produce the heir−looms of fifty generations of your family. The admiration of these, and other people will be value received for your money; and you are not so ignorant of proverbs, those wise saws of antiquity, as not to know that, *When one is at Rome, one must do as Rome does.*

I know, said Mr. Winterdale, with a sigh, I am not wise enough to cope with your ladyship. To argue with you is to drain the ocean with a bucket. May I ask what these things will cost?

Now you have hit upon an argument I cannot answer, replied my mother. I am as ignorant on this subject as the man in the moon. But, if you choose to know, you can write to the upholsterer for his bill.

You may be assured I shall, said her husband. I shall not add to the price of the articles, by taking credit. With a gentleman of his taste, it would make fifty per cent difference, at least.

Now Charlotte, said my mother, ring the bell, for I do not see what more can be said on either side, and we will all go to dinner.

Hold! cried Mr. Winterdale, I have one word more, before I dine.

Be quick then, said his lady; for Henry and Eleanor will be tired of waiting.

Your ladyship dropped a hint about going to London, for two or three months in the year. Have you any such intention?

Why no, replied my mother, not unless circumstances should require.

I have only one argument to oppose to such a project, rejoined Mr. Winterdale; if you go to London, you never see me more. I will endeavour to pardon the past, even down to your ornamental mummies but, beware of the future. Instead of exhausting my anger in unavailing ravings, I may be urged to silent and irrevocable actions.

My mother looked disconcerted for a moment; but recovering herself, she exclaimed, Barbarous man! to entertain a thought of leaving so good a wife! But I will be revenged on you; for I will behave so prettily that you shall find it impossible to live without me. Here is my hand, in confirmation of my promise; and I desire you will kiss it, in revocation of yours.

Mr. Winterdale put her hand to his lips.

And now, continued my mother, as I do not like your grace before meat so well as I hope you will like the meat itself, we will go and bury all our grievances in the stewed carp.

Though, I dare say, neither Henry nor Eleanor thought the time of our absence long, their looks brightened when they saw us enter the eating−room in an amicable manner. When we retired after dinner, my mother related what had passed between herself and her husband to Eleanor; and I took that opportunity to tell her I could not have resisted the falling tear of Mr. Winterdale.

Then Charlotte, said her ladyship, you would have been more weak than wise. What is there so moving in the tear of avarice over its money bags? Or why should I give Mr. Winterdale such an advantage over me, as to let him see that whining could prevail, when reason and passion had been tried in vain?

Then your ladyship acknowledges he has reason on his side? said I.

Not absolutely, replied my mother, there may be a little on both sides.

But I hope, returned I, that you do not mean to go to London.

Shallow politician! exclaimed thy mother, I follow the example of the immortal Mr. Pitt. Whenever he had done, or intended to do any great mischief, he thundered out a greater; and, the people, thankful in escaping the second, received the first as a favour. Do not you see that the fear of going to London has made Mr. Winterdale pocket the upholsterer's bill?

But did not you observe, said I, the threat you provoked him to denounce against you?

I did, replied my mother, and shall not forget it. It is not my intention to drive Mr. Winterdale out of his house; but if I can govern him with an absolute sway in it, and contrive at the same time, to make myself adored for my despotic authority, I shall be as good a model for wives as the great statesman was for ministers.

Any comment from me on the politics of lady Winterdale would be more than superfluous, it would be presumptuous. I shall, therefore, only inform you that peace was thoroughly established in my mother's dominions, and that

I am, very sincerely yours,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 55. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Nov. 14, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

The drawing room of my mother sparkles at this moment with a lustre that reminds me of former days; and I retire to write to you. Not that I have any objection to splendour; or even to shine myself; not that my regard for you, great as it is, demands this sacrifice; but from a heart ill at ease. My fate is decided, or being decided, at this very hour. Today the Montgomery cause is heard.

Were the contest between riches and poverty, only, though I am fully alive to the good things money can command, I think I should hold it light. I can fancy myself happy with Montgomery any where, and any how; so love and health were of the party, and want excluded. But when the question is to live or not live with him, at times I feel myself a coward. I must, however, rouse my spirit into exertion; for if my being his depends upon the award of chancery in my favour, I must prepare myself for disappointment. My counsel doubt; my honest attorney despairs; and Mr. Winterdale has disposed of my estate to my adversary. I am exactly in the situation of a patient given over by the physicians, and now and then lending an ear to an ignorant old nurse, who cries out, while there is life, there is hope.

I remained in the drawing room till I lost deal, revoked, and could not count my tricks; when I left it to talk of family affairs to you.

The every−day visits of the Elringtons at Aberystwith, are continued since our return home; and Mr. Francis has taken advantage of this friendly intercourse to unbosom himself to the gentle Eleanor. He has lamented to her the arbitrary and ungrateful behaviour of his father; admired the sweet and patient temper of his mother; and, having thus given her an interest in their domestic concerns, has ventured to declare his esteem and love for herself. The esteem she accepted, graciously; the love she returned upon his hands.

Henry Winterdale, too, has declared in words, what looks and sighs, and delicate attentions have long left no room to doubt. He asked Eleanor's permission to mention his attachment to his father. Eleanor, in return, looked but it was upon the carpet and sighed, and blushed, and hesitated, and imagined Mr. Winterdale would not approve it.

Henry was troubled with no such imaginations. Charlotte's misfortune, said he, will be your security. Amiable as you both are, the Montgomery estate would have given her the preference in my father's esteem; and I will not deny, what your own penetration may, perhaps, have discovered, that his plan was to unite that estate with his own, by my marriage with the heiress. He is now convinced it cannot be hers; she is no longer an heiress; and his plan is broken.

But, said the modest Eleanor, it is as certain that you might obtain a fortune superior to mine, as it is that you deserve it.

The latter part of your reply I will never admit, said Henry, and the former I will never attempt. Here will I fix, continued he, taking her hand, which she made no effort to withdraw, if I have an advocate in your bosom. My father, who knows you, cannot expect to find your equal. Your retired and simple habits are his own; you have already shewn him the affection of a daughter; your income, with what he may think proper to add to it, will be sufficient for our limited desires; and the happiness of his son will be built on a solid foundation. If my father were to chuse for me, his choice could fall on no other than you.

You flatter me, and deceive yourself, said Eleanor. How can I expect Mr. Winterdale should be satisfied with my fortune, even if it were possible he should be so with me!

You, my sweet Eleanor, replied Henry, are all that is good and lovely; and I will not waste a word to convince you that my father must think so. Your fortune would content any reasonable man; and my father's ideas on that subject are more reasonable than they were.

I have only one favour to beg, said Eleanor; If Mr. Winterdale should shew any reluctance, that you will give up the matter immediately.

Give up my Eleanor while I believed she loved me! exclaimed Henry. This world has nothing could tempt me to do it. Be assured of my father's approbation. He cannot withhold it. He cannot be insensible of merit like yours. Though unobtrusive, it is visible in every look, word, and action; and he has witnessed these every day and hour. But, were it possible he could oppose my desire; as it would be without reason, it would be without effect. To chuse for himself is the natural privilege of every human being, and I will not basely give up my birthright.

Poor Eleanor dropped a tear, in which love, gratitude, and admiration had each a share. It fell upon her hand, and Henry took it off with his lips. I go this instant to my father, continued he, to lay before him my wishes and my hopes.

Stop a moment, cried Eleanor. You know your sole dependence is upon him.

Your income would be riches to me, rejoined Henry, if you would allow me to share it, till I could place you in a more elevated situation; and if we had neither that resource nor any other, as I feel my independence in my own breast, I would maintain it by my bodily strength. I would hold the plough, and wield the flail for my subsistence, as I told Mr. Sharp I had formerly done for my amusement. Would you, my beloved Eleanor, demanded he, be content to support me, if what I believe impossible should happen?

I could not speak, said Eleanor, when she related this conversation to me, but I just ventured to lift my eyes to his, and he darted out of the room. And now, added she, he is with Mr. Winterdale in the study, and I tremble to think what may be the consequence.

Well may you tremble, replied I; for you will be his wife; and what will be the consequence of that, heaven only knows.

Poor Eleanor remained between hope and fear; very seriously persuading herself that what she wished could not happen; yet secretly believing that it might; till we heard Henry's foot quick upon the stairs, and saw him enter our drawing room. We anxiously sought his intelligence in his face. Gay was his air, and brilliant were his eyes, when I asked him for my cousin could not the result of his conference with his father.

As I foretold, replied he. 'Eleanor is mine.

Thank God for it, said I. Our Eleanor would say so too; but you see, she cannot speak.

She cast on me a look of reproach, though not of anger; while Henry drew a chair close to hers, and seated himself beside her. I placed mine close to his. Pray, said I, make me a party in the good news; for I rejoice at it almost as much as yourself: and have the goodness to give it in detail; for though my cousin seems not to be interested in it, I assure you I am. Another look from Eleanor. My dear friend, said I, you look more like a god than a goddess; for you look two ways at once. You ought not to reprove on both sides the question. But begin, Henry, and never mind her.

I told my father, said Henry, that I was going to address him on a subject in which I was deeply interested. I paused a moment, at a loss how to proceed.

Your love for Miss Mowbray, I suppose, said he.

I then proceeded to inform him that his conjecture was right; that I loved her as ardently, and as truly, as man could love a woman. That, replied my father, is only saying you are guilty of the utmost folly and nonsense man is capable of. I know enough of love to be convinced less is sufficient. I loved your mother, and well she deserved it, for I begin to think she was too good for me, but I neither took pleasure in her company or bewailed her loss. I love Lady Winterdale. If I did not, I should either hang myself or run away from her; indeed she may drive me to one of these expedients yet But, Charlotte, said Henry, interrupting himself, I do not know whether I ought to proceed, when Lady Winterdale is the subject?

By all means, answered I. Mr. Winterdale is extremely welcome to all he can say upon that subject, and upon myself into the bargain; so he will but raise Eleanor in proportion as we fall.

You will find you have not wholly escaped. said Henry. Women have long been accounted necessary evils, continued my father, and I am afraid her ladyship comes under that description. That she is an evil of the first magnitude cannot be doubted, and, I wish she had never fallen in my way. It is true, I have the remedy in my own power; but if I can keep her within any tolerable bounds I shall not have recourse to it. She has so much beauty, ease, and good humour that I shall drag my chain as long as I can bear it. To tell you the truth, I begin to suspect she has a stronger hold on my affections than I imagined; but as for all the love that man can feel for woman, I despise the notion.

May you be long happy with Lady Winterdale, Sir, said I, and may she become all you could wish. Good sense, and good nature leave room to hope for it. My future happiness depends upon my union with Miss Mowbray; I presume you can have no objection to it.

I have not, returned my father. You must marry; and, therefore be hen−pecked or miserable: miserable, if you struggle against female domination; hen−pecked if you submit to it; for you may depend upon it that even the gentle Eleanor has woman enough in her to try to be master. You are fortunate, however, that she has none of Lady Winterdale's blood in her veins. I did think of Charlotte, as I formerly told you. She has a tincture of her mother's composition in her, extravagance and levity; but her fortune might have made some amends. That is gone; she has chosen for herself; and she is fitter for the wife of a rakish officer than a sober country gentleman. Charlotte is a good girl too, upon the whole; frank, honest, and affectionate; but you are wiser in chusing the daughter of a country parson than of Lady Winterdale. Not that I like parsons, either.

Here Henry paused. Is that all, demanded I.

No, replied Henry, there is one circumstance more, which I am afraid to mention lest it should offend you both.

Proceed, said I. We will arm ourselves with good humour.

My father insists upon our marriage taking place immediately, said Henry, addressing himself to Eleanor.

You might be sure that would offend Miss Mowbray, said I. It is well such a monstrous proposal is not your own. Eleanor betrayed great emotion, and some fear; but remained silent.

He says, continued Henry, that she is in a bad school for a wife; and may soon learn more of Lady Winterdale than she ought to practise.

That is an abominable libel, said I, because it is true. But, Henry, what an inconsistent jumble of atoms is that lordly animal, man! I believe Mr. Winterdale is right, in saying we were made to govern you. His reason discovers every failing of his wife; yet her fascination binds him to her! He fears her example for the wife of his son; yet is content to submit to her, as his own!

Henry went on to inform his intended bride that his father proposed their residing at the lodge, and would settle an income on them adequate to their proper establishment; and he did not quit her, till the eloquence of love had prevailed upon her to regard their approaching union, without being irreconcileably offended.

Now good night, and to bed, Harriet. Not to sleep; for I shall see all around me judges and counsellors, solitary imprisonment, hard labour, hard fare, and woollen robes; except in one little corner, where I shall catch a glimpse of love, liberty, and Montgomery. Monday brings an account of the decision to

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 56. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Nov. 21, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

The Montgomery cause has been heard, but is not decided. The proofs on both sides were so many and so complicated, that they could not all be examined, and the hearing was postponed for a month: I have, therefore, three more weeks to be haunted by the apparitions I mentioned in my last. All I understand of the matter is that Sir James has established his claim in a manner that my counsel believe cannot be controverted.

I wish it were over. One of the wise men of the bible says, hope deferred maketh the heart sick. I have nothing to hope; yet am I very sick. My only cordial is the letters of Montgomery; and, precious as they are, they seem almost like a cordial set upon a shelf, which I am forbidden to taste, till I know whether it suit my case or not.

If company could charm my mind, we have it almost to dissipation. The Elringtons have had two grand dinner parties, since our return from Aberystwith, for the purpose of introducing us to every family within the reach of a visit. All left cards at Winterdale, and had ours, in return. Invitations, on all sides, followed of course; and parties for eating, dancing, music, and cards, have trodden upon each other's heels. The bridal paraphernalia of Lady Winterdale has been delayed, not forgotten; and the high priests and priestesses of that temple of fashion, Bond−street, have been called upon to officiate in the decoration of her person. This would once have occasioned a mutiny in the state; it is now considered as among the regular order of events.

Mr. Winterdale has, of his own free will, declared to his lady that he will receive every body, and visit every body, once; to give his sanction to her company; and that afterwards he will be at liberty to follow his own inclination; which, by that time, I imagine, will correspond with hers. My mother is all gaiety and all sweetness; and, at home or abroad, makes her husband the principal object of her attention. No remark of his, however trifling, falls to the ground. She waits a moment, to see if it is noticed by another: if it is not, she replies to it herself; places it in the fairest light, and adds to its consequence. In a word, she draws him out, and draws more good sense out of him than any person ever suspected was in. Shy, and almost timid himself, his face shines with gratitude for such distinction.

The lodge is taken for Henry and Eleanor, and workmen are employed in fitting it up for their reception. This has exposed us to an attack from Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sharp.

I *wow* and declare, my dear Lady Winterdale, said the lady, I'm *purdigiously* happy in catching your ladyship at home. Since you have got that there beautiful carriage of yours, one comes, and comes, and you're always a gadding. But I must not be angry; for, egad, I believe I should do so my self. We hear strange news, here! All the windows of the Lodge open! men knocking and hammering, painting and papering, like the deuce! People say Mr. Henry's going to have Miss Mowbray!

All the people in the world cannot make me believe that, said Mr. Sharp. Now, my dear Miss Mowbray now, is not it very shocking for people to come to go to raise *sich scandelous* reports? For my *bootiful* lovely Miss Mowbray to prove false−hearted, is what nobody shall *iver* make me think on; when, here, I've followed her, morning, noon, and night, for this six months, and done all that *iver* lay in my power to make myself agreeable! You could not be so cruel, could you?

If such a report were true, Sir, replied Eleanor, you could not accuse me of either cruelty or injustice; as I never encouraged the partiality you honoured me with.

Not encouraged the partiality I have honoured you with! , repeated Mr. Sharp. I wonder at you for saying *sich* a thing! Have not you always been sweet−tempered, and good−*hoomered*, when I was kind, and obliging? and did not you give me reason to expect that I should, one day or other, find you *compliable*, and then I should take you while you was in the mind?

I told you positively, Sir, answered Eleanor, my mind could not alter, on that subject; and I did not think it necessary to be rude and savage, to convince you of it.

But I know, rejoined Mr. Sharp, that young ladies do alter their minds on that subject, whether they will or not; and, moreover than that, that they do not always speak their mind, *partickilarly* when then they say, No. I am sure I've had encouragement enough; and even Mr. Winterdale, his own self encouraged me.

Come, come, said Mrs. Thacker; you lovers are not in the way to make it up, I see. I'll tell you what I think is the upshot of the whole business. Mr. Henry Winterdale is a very handsome gentleman, and a very genteel gentleman, and a gentleman that any lady might like; but, first come, first *sarved*. Mr. Sharp, though I say it, that should not say, is as good as any gentleman in the land that is not nobility; and he had the first chance; and I'm sure Miss Mowbray would not use him ill for nobody.

O dear heart, alive! aunt, said Mr. Sharp, I protest you make me quite ashamed! I must own and confess that I am no ways comparable to Mr. Henry Winterdale; though, perhaps I could keep a lady better than he could, especially at present, in his father's life time. But, as to my having the first chance, that's what I think myself.

But, said my mother, you surely cannot imagine that the circumstance of having first declared your attachment to a young lady intitles you to a preference?

Why not? demanded Mr. Sharp. If I may venture to come to go to speak my mind, what business had he to take the liberty to declare himself after?

That is a question which belongs to Mr. Henry to answer, said my mother.

No, returned Mr. Sharp, I do not wish him to answer it; and, as he is not here, you may as well please to be so kind as not to tell him of it, for fear he should think I am not quite so polite, as I should be. But have the goodness to be so obliging as to favour me with an. answer yourself. Does not your ladyship think that when I courted Miss

Mowbray first, she would be very false−hearted to go to have any other?

I think, by that title Miss Mowbray could never be yours, replied my mother; for it is not to be supposed that a young woman of her beauty, merit, and fortune, has not been addressed by some gentleman before yourself. Don't you think so, Mrs. Thacker? I dare say you did not find it necessary to accept of the first lover who declared his passion for you.

O, no, to be sure, said Mrs. Thacker; your ladyship is *purfitly* right. I'm certain I refused a dozen gentlemen, and some of them Londoners, too, before I could be *prewailed* upon to marry my gentleman.

O, dear Aunt, cried Mr. Sharp, now I'm *ruinated*! How could you go to say such a thing as that! Now Miss Mowbray will *niver* have me, as sure as a gun! But, *howiver*, there's one hope *yit*. I'm positive sure you did not behave to your gentlemen with so much sweetness and kindness, and *good−hoomer* as she has done to me. You could not do that!

O, nothing at all like it, replied Mrs. Thacker. I was *wery* cruel, indeed; nobody would never come near me twice. But all this is foreign to the *subjick*. Somebody is going to live at Ravenhill Lodge, that's certain; and who can it be but Mr. Henry Winterdale? But he is not *obligated* to marry Miss Mowbray, neither. For my part, I *suspeck* it's you, Miss Montgomery; and your sitting there, mumchance, is never a bit the less like it.

I am afraid, said I, worse luck attends me.

What ill luck are you afraid of, Charlotte? demanded Mr. Winterdale, who entered the room while I was speaking.

I am afraid I shall never be so fortunate as to marry Mr. Henry Winterdale, answered I.

No, said Mr. Winterdale; I believe that fortune, be it good or bad, is reserved for another?

And pray, Sir, said Mr. Sharp, may I be so bold as to take the liberty of asking who the lady is?

You may ask who the lady is, and I will tell you, replied Mr. Winterdale; but you never took the liberty to be bold, in your life.

O, dear, Sir, I must say you are the very *obligingest* gentleman in all the world. I must confess I am quite anxious to know; because it may happen that I have a *leetle*, tiny, bit of an interest in it, myself.

The young man has made his own choice; and our fair Eleanor is the object of it. I was not consulted, till all was fixed.

Going to have Miss Mowbray! exclaimed Mr. Sharp.

Going to marry Miss Mowbray! exclaimed Mrs. Thacker.

I always thought, Sir, said the lady, that you intended Miss Montgomery for your son. I'm sure I never saw you behave with such monstrous politeness to nobody else.

Whatever my intentions were was of no consequence, for, as I told you before, my consent was not asked, till matters were settled between themselves.

But, surely, Sir, said Mrs. Thacker, you are not a gentleman to let your own son do just whatever he pleases, and never be the man to say no to it!

No, said Mr. Sharp, I'm positive certain Mr. Winterdale can *niver* let himself down to that! he can *niver* let his own son mount upon his own shoulders! And I humbly hope, Sir, you will let Mr. Henry know that he is not to be your master. Be so kind, Sir, as to tell him your mind about Miss Mowbray.

I have done that, replied Mr. Winterdale. I have told him that I believe he can no where find a young woman so deserving.

My gracious! cried Mr. Sharp; then all is over, indeed! I always expected to have had Miss Mowbray, myself, Sir. I have been waiting for her all this time, and doing *ivery think* in the world to gain her favour. I've always walked with her, and sat next to her, and helped her to *ivery think*; and, you know, Sir, you gave me leave to follow her to Aberystwith; and my Aunt Thacker always told me I was quite sure of her. But now, Sir, if you go to say that Mr. Henry has got her consent, and they have both got your consent; why, I don't know what to think of it: I am afraid I must be forced to give it up, whether I will or no: though I must take the liberty to be allowed to say that I don't think it the very best and genteelest treatment that *iver* I met with in all my life.

It's a bite! cried Mrs. Thacker. I'm sure if any gentleman had come after me, I'd ha' given him a good smack o' the face, to let him know what he had to trust to; before I'd ha' let him ha' wasted his time over me for nothing.

Perhaps thou might'st not have found thy aunt's the genteelest treatment that *iver* thou met'st with in all thy life said Mr. Winterdale; but I cannot call it unreasonable; for if no words could make thee feel, blows might properly have been tried. However, as ladies are so hard−hearted, if I were in thy place, I would go home, and comfort myself, by marrying my housekeeper.

Mr. Sharp, said my mother, do not let your ill success with Eleanor make you despair of another lady. Henry, you know, had the advantage of living in the same house with her; and I have reason to believe her heart was his, before you attempted to gain it.

Ah! cried her husband, that living in the same house is the devil! what unlucky things has it brought about!

Mr. Winterdale has a strong talent for satire, resumed my mother, still addressing herself to Mr. Sharp; and neither you nor I can escape our share.

Well, said Mr. Winterdale, if thou dost not like that plan, remain at the parsonage. I shall always be glad to see thee; and shall always find thy company entertaining.

Mr. Sharp made his serious acknowledgments, and he and the lady took their leave; as, for the present does

Your,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 57. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Nov. 28, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

I believe the time is not far distant, when my mother and Mr. Winterdale, having both tried their strength, will, according to her original idea, sit down and be quiet. Possibly the skirmish which happened this morning may be one of the last.

I have been thinking of the most delightful scheme imaginable, said Lady Winterdale to her husband, as we were sitting round the breakfast table; I am sure you will be charmed with it. We will celebrate Henry's marriage by getting up a play; and I do not know that we can fix upon a better than *Much ado about Nothing.* You will make an admirable Governor of Messina; Henry and Charlotte shall perform Claudio and Hero (for we will excuse the bride); I shall not make a contemptible Beatrice myself; Mr. Sharp may take the part of Dogberry, if he has sense enough to play the fool; and the Elringtons may support the inferior characters: but what shall we do for a Benedick? I am quite at a loss for a Benedick! I wish Montgomery were here.

Here her ladyship paused, for an answer; but her husband making no reply, she added, Don't you think it a charming plan?

Mr. Winterdale's answer was short, but expressive No theatricals!

But, resumed his lady, on further consideration you cannot but approve it. The expence will be trifling. I would not have entertained a thought of it, if we had had a theatre to build; but our great hall is sufficiently spacious both for the performance and the audience; and it is now elegantly fitted up. We shall want nothing from London, but a few scenes, dresses, and decorations: the next town can furnish the seats. Again my mother paused.

No scenes, dresses, and decorations, said Mr. Winterdale, firmly.

It would be quite economical, rejoined his lady. We should entertain as many people for one pretty, light, cold supper, as the Elringtons do with eight or ten massive, smoaking dinners. Besides, what an honour it would be to our taste! What a noise it would make in the county! It would find its way into all the newspapers on the Wye and the Severn, and be chronicled, with the wedding, even in town. Come, Mr. Winterdale, I know you have too much taste to follow the beaten track, and trust to your cook for the entertainment of your company; and you have too much good sense to object to any proposal of mine, without giving some reason for it. You give none against this.

Heaven has not bestowed upon me the talent to reason with your ladyship, said Mr. Winterdale, and I will no longer presume to attempt it. I shall only say that I will have no plays in my house while I am in it.

Well, said my mother, if you are obstinately bent upon neither performing yourself, or seeing us perform, we will get up our play some other time, when you are from home, upon business, and will not be troubled with it.

Lady Winterdale, replied her husband, now we are upon this subject, I will say a few words, which I hope I shall not have occasion to repeat. You have hitherto disposed of my fortune according to your own fancy; but you have done it in a manner suitable to my rank; except in the alterations and furniture of my house. A carriage, company, and dress, accord with my station; and, though I was content without them, I am sensible of their propriety. Furniture was also, in some degree necessary; but here you stepped beyond the bounds of propriety; and I forgave you. To turn the mansion of a plain country gentleman into a playhouse would be an expence without a pretext; a folly without excuse. If you persist in it, take the consequence; which I now tell you will be food for repentance. So saying, with an air which had more of dignity in it than I ever saw before, he left the room.

Henry rose, and, approaching my mother, said, with great earnestness, I intreat you, Madam, not to embitter the happiest time of my life, the time which gives me my Eleanor, by an exhibition so repugnant to my father's

feelings. So far from taking any part in it, I could not be present at it.

Dear Madam, said Eleanor, rising, and arranging herself by the side of her future spouse, instead of doing me honour, it would be to me the greatest misery! I would not, for the world, enter Mr. Winterdale's family under circumstances which must give him such pain!

Ah! sure a pair was never seen
So justly form'd to meet by nature!

exclaimed Lady Winterdale. You are, indeed, an exemplary couple of mortals, and God forbid I should be the first to disturb your married tranquillity! You may be assured I have had enough of *Much ado about Nothing*, without the play.

When Henry had quitted the room, I ventured to express, to my mother, my serious apprehensions that she would trifle with Mr. Winterdale's temper too far; and provoke a vengeance she might endeavour to avert, when it was too late.

Fear it not, Charlotte, replied she: it is impossible to be more cautious than I am. I feel every step of my way before me; and, by that means, discover, how far I can go with safety, and where I ought to stop. I will not lose a hair's breadth of the ground I have gained; and wherever it is possible, I will add a hair's breadth to it; but I own to you that I believe I shall not be able to proceed much further. While Mr. Winterdale blustered, and dealt about his random blows, like a madman, my coolness parried them, and they were lost. When he becomes cool and determined, like myself, the advantage is more equal; and we are come to the point most married folks arrive at: *that is*, I am master ninety−nine times in a hundred; because he will not undergo the struggle necessary to conquer me; and he is master the hundredth; because he is resolved to prevail. You are too good Eleanor, continued my mother, addressing herself to my cousin, to follow my example, and Henry is too good to give you occasion; but, take my word for it, my dear, that the generality of the married High Mightinesses will concede that to fear, which they will refuse to gratitude and reason; and if a wife will not be sometimes the conqueror of her husband, she must be always his slave.

Indeed, said Eleanor, I am not formed for a state of warfare. Love and peace must be the blessings of my married life; or it will be most wretched. I am thankful to providence that my Henry will not require unreasonable submission; for, if he did, I could not refuse it.

It is scarcely possible, said I, for your ladyship to find two pupils who would profit less by your admirable precepts and example; because, I humbly conceive that, to reduce them to practice one must not feel. Now, if I had offended my husband, whether justly, or not, I should feel. If I did not betray my uneasiness by words, I should by silence, which would be construed into sullenness, and, perhaps, might soon become such. I might sit down to table with him, when it would require an effort to say, May I help you to some of this? and when I should hardly know in what tone to say it. I should find such a situation so intolerable, that, believe me, I should burst into tears; throw myself into his arms; and ask forgiveness, whether I were right or wrong.

I am glad I have a little less feeling, and a little more prudence than a couple of love−sick girls, said my mother. I will, however, give you two or three truisms; though I utter them, not to the winds, but, to the gentle zephyrs.

In this wicked world, whoever *will* submit, be it man or woman, *must* submit. Farther, if you stoop, of your own accord, you must be trampled on, whether you will or no. Few are the human beings who will not abuse power; and many a planter in the West Indies has become a brute, that, in England would have made a good master. And now, my dear girls, I am so far from wishing you to profit by my maxims, that I would have you go home, and kiss the rod that is your husbands.

I fear, my dear Harriet, my mother's truisms cannot be disproved by me. But certainly gratitude cannot be wholly extinct in the breast of man; and a gentle and affectionate behaviour, on the part of a wife, must find the way to it! Whatever be its reward, such, if ever I am a wife, shall be the conduct of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 58. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Dec. 5, 1812

My Dear Harriet,

At a time when my affairs stand still, and my ideas are whirling about with increased velocity, it is fortunate to have met with a novel that could arrest my attention, and is not undeserving of *yours.* My mother and Mr. Winterdale begin to understand each other's strength, and have laid by their arms; Henry and Eleanor are waiting for lawyers and workmen; and I for the fiat of my Lord Chancellor, which will doom me to banishment. A very short time will make my cousin a bride and me a fugitive. In the interim, allow me to talk to you of Hermsprong; or Man as he is not; which, inverting the order those authors are usually placed in, I rank with Smollett, and above Fielding and Richardson.

The plot of Hermsprong is sufficiently interesting, without being improbable. Two of the incidents, Miss Campinet's escape from her father's house, and Hermsprong's declaration of his family, though natural, are quite unexpected. The characters are admirably conceived, and uniformly supported.

The character of Hermsprong is so exactly what Man *might*, and *ought to be*, that we are surprised to find it what he *is not.* The basis on which it is formed is truth and rectitude.− What so natural! so easy! yet it is so uncommon that the character is new. His father's precept was, *Do always what is right:* and his illustration of it, *In most human occurrences the right is at once seen and acknowledged. When discrimination is necessary, discriminate with strength and with care. When you have judged, that is the right to you.* In civilised society this may be sometimes difficult, especially where dependence imposes fetters on the mind; but it is much more practicable than practised. At least, I feel so much of the Hermsprong in me that, like Moliere's Bourgeois Gentilhomme, who had spoken prose all his life, without knowing it; I have made it my rule of action, without being sensible that I had a rule. I have sometimes lain under the imputation of obstinacy for adhering to it; but I have generally repented, when I have been persuaded to deviate from it. In the fatal instance which imposes the penance of my future days, I erred against my ideas of right, in expending more money than I had then to expend; but I conformed to them in procuring money at my own cost, to discharge just debts, however foolishly contracted.

But to return to Hermsprong.

Miss Fluart is the second female personage in almost every novel. The heroine is always tender and sentimental; so is Miss Campinet. Her friend, by way of contrast, is generally lively, and, if the author know how to make her such, arch and witty; so is Miss Fluart. But, from the days of Richardson, who first drew the character, and called it Charlotte Grandison, to the present, never did I meet with Miss Fluart's equal; she is always arch, and always witty; yet seldom, very seldom, oversteps the modesty of nature. Her scenes with Lord Grondale, particularly that in which she presents herself to be married, instead of Miss Campinet, are inimitable. I only wish her intrepidity had carried her out of the house without a pistol.

Doctor Blick is a new character on paper. In common life it abounds all over the kingdom; but the many do not see it, and the few dare not tell it. Party and politics have made dreadful havoc with the christian charity of Englishmen; and, especially, of the English clergy.

Sir Philip Chestrum, a mother−spoiled boy of six and twenty, is not so well drawn as the rest. As Boileau says, *Rien n'est beau que le vrai, Nothing is beautiful that is not true;* and the vulgarity of Sir Philip is, in a baronet, below the truth.

The landlord of the Golden Ball, who served under Marshal Keith, is so well sketched that I wished to have seen him again. The scene at his house equals any thing I ever met with; so does Hermsprong's letter to Miss Campinet, on his going to America, and his conversation at Mrs. Garnet's, on the same subject; so do more scenes than I can enumerate.

There is a lady in this neighbourhood, who was an intimate friend of Robert Bage, the author of Hermsprong. I learn from her that he was a manufacturer of paper, at Elford, near Lichfield; adored by his family, but little known to the rest of the world. His friendships were few; but warm and steady; his integrity was incorruptible; and his manners were courteous. He wrote his first novel, Mount Henneth, to divert his mind under a serious loss of property, occasioned by an unsuccessful speculation in iron works; and declared writing to be the best medicine for grief within his knowledge.

Mr. Bage corresponded with the lady from whom I received this information, and I have been favoured with the sight of many of his letters. They are remarkable for ease, grace, and brevity; and also for a peculiar turn, a manner, which no words that I am mistress of can express; and which, in my opinion ranks him still higher as an epistolary writer, than a writer of novels.

Mr. Winterdale is gone to London, to be present at what I hope will be the final hearing of the Montgomery cause. He had the kindness to shake my hand before he went, and assure me of his good wishes; though he believed he had no services to offer. Sir James is in town, on the same business. Montgomery is at Worcester, with a part of the regiment to which he belongs.

Eleanor's wedding cloaths are arrived. They are like herself, simple and elegant. The ceremony is to be performed on Mr. Winterdale's return. I have undertaken to be bridesmaid; but not the value of one shilling will I purchase, or accept, on the occasion. It is as decent to rejoice in new white sattin, as it is to mourn in crape and bombazine; but these things are not from the heart. I shall participate in my cousin's prospect of felicity, as truly, in habits which I have worn before; and I cannot afford any new symbols of happiness.

I am prepared to undergo my exile with firmness. How many persons have voluntarily banished themselves from society: and shall I not yield to duty? I may say necessity; for duty is necessity.

There was a lady in London, an aunt of the celebrated John Wilkes, who having met with a disappointment in love, in her early youth, whether from the death or infidelity of its object, I now forget, vowed never more to see the sun, She shut herself up in her bedchamber, which she did not quit, till she was carried out in her coffin. A lady, a friend of ours, who is now about sixty years of age, was once admitted into her apartment, when a child, owing to the nursery maid who attended her being a relation of the people with whom Mrs. Wilkes lodged. She perfectly remembers seeing her; in a light, drab−coloured camblet manteau, with cuffs and robings of crimson sattin; the exact model of the dress she wore at the time of her misfortune; the fashion and colour of which she never changed. She had then been confined about thirty years. She had a fire in her room, night and day, summer and winter, and would sometimes remain in her bed for two or three days together. But there is some reason to believe she cast a longing, lingering, look upon the world she had quitted; for, her windows being towards the park, she had an awning made to them, that, while it excluded the heavens, gave her an opportunity to see the earth; and she frequently amused herself with looking at those who were walking along it. Mr. Wilkes often

visited his aunt, and shewed her great respect.

There seems something singular in the ladies of Mr. Wilkes's family. I have heard of a sister of his at Bath, who ran into the opposite extreme. As the former lady never breathed the outward air; so this never breathed without it. She lived and slept with her windows open, throughout the year; and those persons who did not chuse to submit to the inconvenience of the rain and snow, driving into her drawing room, chose not to visit her in rain or snow.

There is an instance of self imprisonment in our neighbourhood; less rigorous than that of Mrs. Wilkes; but more extraordinary for its motive.

A lady and her brother lived together in great harmony; both young, and both unmarried. The brother died; and such was the sister's sorrow, though she inherited his fortune, that, without a vow, it brought on a habit of staying at home. In summer she sometimes gets into her carriage, for an airing; but never steps out of it; except at her own door. In winter she is immoveable as a dormouse. She folds herself up in a wide, loose, wrapper, the emblem of ancient days, and never quits her fire−side, but to her bed.

This lady is about sixty years of age. In summer she admits a few old friends, of which number Mrs. Elrington is one. In September, before Mrs. Lillimore's winter set in, Mrs. Elrington took Eleanor and myself with her, one morning, to Brookford Hall, a fine old mansion, which is the residence of that lady. We drove along an avenue, in tolerable preservation; and entered a spacious hall that reminded me of the small armoury at the tower. Fowling pieces and pistols, of every description, and in great numbers, with here and there a sword; all perfectly bright, and in the nicest order, were disposed along the walls, in different forms of stars and crosses. Struck with astonishment, I whispered to Mrs. Elrington, What unaccountable decorations for the house of a single gentlewoman. That lady informed me that they had all belonged to Mrs. Lillimore's brother; that immediately after his death they had been placed as I saw them, by order of his sister, who still took great delight in contemplating them, in her summer excursions into her haLl; and that an atom of dust suffered to rest upon any one of them would be a crime; but a spot of rust, unpardonable.

We found Mrs. Lillimore seated in a large parlour, wainscotted with dark brown oak; and dressed in a thick silk, nearly of the same colour; with a white muslin apron. She received Mrs. Elrington with great cordiality; and Eleanor and me with good breeding; though with some timidity. Her countenance was expressive of mildness, tinctured with melancholy. There was nothing particularly interesting in the conversation of this recluse; and Mrs. Elrington, apprehensive that the company of strangers would not be long agreeable, asked us, if we should not like to see the gardens.

Mrs. Lillimore described the way, and suffered us to go without a guide. We observed servants peeping at us from different stations, with a jealous eye; and it was not without reason they did so; for to make themselves amends for their attention to the armoury, which was under the eye of their mistress; they totally neglected the grounds, which she did not see. I never beheld an inhabited place so complete a ruin. The situation is low; and presented us with fish ponds, covered with stagnant green; seats mouldered into fire wood; grass plats, overgrown with brambles; and walks, of which the foundation was gravel, and all the outward and visible parts long, tall weeds, that our feet could scarcely find their way through.

I cannot be in so deplorable a state as these half animated beings who have suffered sorrow to swallow up, not only enjoyment, but hope. I can range the fields and climb the mountains. I *shall* employ my hands; which will, in some measure, divert my thoughts. And I *may* cherish a distant hope, if the inconstancy of man do not destroy it, that, at some distant period, I may yet be the wife of him I love.

Such are the consolatory prospects of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 59. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Dec. 14, 1812.

Give me joy, my dear Harriet. The world is mine! Montgomery is mine! In a word, the Montgomery estate is mine! I tread on air. Eleanor stands at my elbow, and says it is almost twelve o'clock, and time to go to sleep. Sleep! Eleanor, I disdain so common, so mean, a blessing! People that are between happiness and misery may sleep; I do not know that I shall sleep any more! Be not afraid, however, that my joy should prove stronger than my reason; only have the goodness to allow it to run over to you, that I may be enabled to carry my cup steady to every body else.

Never shall I forget the lesson my folly and my fears have taught me. I have read of some wise and virtuous man, who, being raised from poverty to a high station, preserved his humble habits to remind him of his origin. So will I treasure up, in my imagination, the gown of woollen I had cut out for myself. If ever my thoughts outrun the sober pace of propriety and prudence, I will look at the picture I have often drawn, of Charlotte Montgomery, sitting under a lowly thatch, and knitting her own stockings. The transition appears wonderful; almost incredible but it is time to tell you how it came to pass.

When Mr. Winterdale arrived in London he consulted Mr. Mountney, and was confirmed in the opinion that he, and every other person, had long entertained, that the decree of the Lord Chancellor must, inevitably be against me. He then ordered all the title deeds of the family to be conveyed to his lodgings; and, attended by Mr. Mountney, he examined them, one by one, with the greatest care. Nothing appeared, to support my pretensions. His cautious and penetrating eye then measured the height of the large iron chest, in which they had been deposited, and compared it with the depth within. He observed a considerable difference. He sounded the bottom; it was hollow. He surveyed the ends; and found, at one of them, a division of the iron, scarcely perceptible, which indicated a drawer.

Aided, perhaps, by experience, he pressed against the opposite end, till he touched a spring; when the drawer flew open. I can hardly breathe while I tell you that this contained my fate. In this, among other parchments of consequence, was found an indisputable document in my favour; besides several leathern bags of good old guineas; which, by the dates, appear to have been the hoard of my grandfather, and to have slept a generation for me.

I feel myself almost in the situation of the prodigal, who, having spent his substance, found the mandate of his deceased father to go and hang himself and, in obeying it, fell to the ground, amidst a shower of gold.

This eventful writing was produced at the trial, with the chest in which it had been found. At a proof so positive, and so unexpected, Sir James Montgomery turned pale; his counsel threw down their brief and my rightful inheritance was adjudged to be mine.

What do I owe to Mr. Winterdale, whose indefatigable industry, and piercing sagacity have recovered my fortune from the recesses of the grave in which it lay buried! But this is not all. He has brought me the bonds I had given to the Jews; and I have seen them devoured by the flames. No memorial now remains of my folly, but in my heart; from whence it will never be obliterated. He has taken up the bonds by checks upon his banker, put my grandfather's gold into his coffers; and the remainder of the sum is to be paid when I am at age. As I want but four months of that period, I shall not be long in his debt; and as the savings of my minority, which are immense, will then undoubtedly be mine, I shall redeem the estate from mortgage, and still be rich.

Mr. Winterdale having rendered me these services, left Mendall to transact some business in town; stepped into the mail coach; and was the bearer of the joyful tidings himself. When he told them, I burst into tears; threw my arms about his neck, and kissed him. We have had one battle, however; but I have conquered; as I was determined to dh repaying him all the debts contracted by Lady Montgomery, during her widowhood. He resisted it long, and very sincerely; but as I was convinced that justice demanded it, I was not to be drawn or driven from my purpose; and, at last, he yielded.

Now, what a glorious revenge will I take on that Sir James Montgomery, who threatened to let his son go to prison for my debts, while he, himself, enjoyed my fortune! I will be revenged by making him a respectful daughter, and his son an affectionate wife. I will bring that estate into his family, of which he would not allow me a share; and he shall own, if possible, that a *sinner who repenteth,* is as acceptable as *a just person, who needeth no repentance.* As the father of my beloved husband I will respect Sir James; but my christian creed will not compel me to love the man who could endeavour to crush a helpless young woman, already beaten down by misfortune. I must, however do Sir James the justice to acknowledge that he appeared moved at my distress, and pleased with my firmness.

What an omnipotent agent is money!

How little did I know its power, when I thoughtlessly squandered it on dress and amusements! To say nothing of the blessings it will enable me to bestow on others, what blessings has it conferred upon myself! From a destined outcast of society, I command the hand of the man I love. Instead of taking advantage of his generosity, at the risque of his father's renunciation, and his own personal safety; I evince my own, by forgetting prejudice, and forgiving animosity. Instead of following my husband, with a downcast eye, into the presence of his offended father; hearing him implore pardon, as if he had committed a fault; and become responsible for me, as if I were expected to commit more; I shall enter, hand in hand; and be presented as the bride, who has selected him from among a thousand, and brought a solid estate to an empty title.

Do not regard this as silly boasting; imagine I shall be weak enough to betray any symptoms of purse−proud vanity. I value my fortune only as it procures me things I value still higher; and the first of these, that which gives *importance* to all the rest, is Montgomery. I can repeat the second verse of a song, of which I once, in jest, gave you the first.

But when his worth my hand shall gain,
No word, or look of mine shall shew,
That I the smallest thought retain,
Of what my bounty did bestow.

Bounty, however, is too poor a word. I wish Sheridan had said,

Of what affection did bestow.

Another blessing, which I owe to money is the wiping off part of the stain of my mother's disingenuous conduct towards Mr. Winterdale, before her marriage. As far as money can do it, that pleasure is mine. Her husband has no longer sustained a loss. What more can be done towards taking away the reproach depends upon his lady, in future.

If ever I have children, my dear Harriet, among the first lessons I teach them shall be those of economy. I will have engraven at the beginning of every one of their books. *Save where you may, that you may be able to spend and give where you ought.* For want of such a lesson, what is my mother? A beautiful superstructure, without a foundation: a tree, bearing lovely flowers, and delicious fruit; but nodding and bending with every blast: a woman, with a good understanding, a happy temper, and irresistible manners; yielding, without reflection, to

every idle and expensive gratification. And what might I have been, under such tuition, if love and misfortune had not taught me to think for myself!

I have written till I have *soberized* my senses; and my eye−lids court that *knitter up of the ravelled sleeve of care*, which I wantonly despised at the beginning of my letter. If now my fancy present me with the images of great perriwigs, they will be eclipsed by that of my lover.

Ever Yours,

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY

Letter 60. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

Winterdale, Dec. 17, 1812.

My Dear Harriet,

Montgomery travelled from Worcester, on the wings of love and expectation; and entered our breakfast room the morning after I wrote to you last. Fortunately I was near the door; or I cannot say what mischief might have ensued; or whether tea or coffee; cups or saucers; or all together, might have been the victims of my haste. How I got there God only knows, so you will not require an explanation from me; but, certain it is, I found myself in his arms, and felt him press me to his bosom.

If such unmaidenly proceeding shock your delicacy, I will not enter upon my own defence: in the first place, because I have not time; in the second, because I am not sure that it is defensible. But I must say, I should feel more reluctance to let fall my head on my lover's shoulder, or his bosom, in the most delightful of all arbours; or by the light of the most heavenly of all moons; as many very modest young ladies in novels have done; than to give him, in the face of my whole family, such an unpremeditated testimony of my joy at meeting him; after a separation, which, though short, might probably have been eternal. We were both sensible, however, that this unequivocal expression of our happiness was not quite decorous; and I took my seat with some confusion.

Montgomery paid his respects to all the party in silence. My mother was the first who broke it by saying, I am a witness of your claim to daughter; and, I believe, it will not this time, be made in vain. Charlotte will grant that to a poor soldier which she refused to the presumptive heir of the Montgomery estate.

I doubt it not, replied Montgomery. To owe affluence to my Charlotte is a trifle, after having been so happy as to obtain her heart.

That trifle will now, fortunately, accompany the more important gift, which it has long been out of my power to withhold, said I : and here, in the presence of my mother and cousin, the former evidences of your claim; and of Mr. Winterdale and his son, whom I regard as my father and brother; do I recognize your title to both.

I presented my hand to Montgomery. The tear glistened in his eye. He pressed my hand to his lips in silence; and, after some moments, said with great emotion. I cannot thank you for such goodness. It shall be the study of my life to deserve it, though I can never hope to succeed.

You young men, said Mr. Winterdale, are very dextrous carvers of your own happiness. Because the sun shines you think it will always be day.

Can I doubt my happiness with Miss Montgomery, Sir? demanded my namesake.

No, certainly, replied Mr. Winterdale. I never doubted my happiness with her mother till after she was my wife. Then, indeed, I found the sweets would not cloy, for want of a due proportion of bitters.

You, yourself, consider my marriage with Miss Mowbray as the means to secure my happiness, said Henry to his father.

You have heard of your old Aunt Deborah, the greatest match−maker in the county. She was miserable in marriage herself, and thought every person ought to marry, that he might not escape his share of vexation. However, as each must have his share, I do think that Montgomery's and yours stand a chance to be small. Charlotte is a noble girl; and our pretty, blushing Eleanor, there, is sweet−tempered and prudent. Perhaps, you may both be as happy as it is right for man to be in this world. My future daughter−in−law, added Mr. Winterdale, addressing himself to Montgomery, is to be married immediately. I suppose you would not forgive me, if I were to persuade her friend to become a wife, at time same time?

I could not find words to express my gratitude, Sir.

Then remain dumb, while I try. What say you, my good girl? continued Mr. Winterdale, turning to me. Do you think I can prevail?

I am afraid I shall not be able to deny you, Sir, answered I; or even to make a merit of my compliance, by pretending that it is in return for the favours you have heaped upon me. To marry, or not to marry, is, indeed, an important question; but, that once determined, a few weeks more or less, in the time, make little difference. I have always considered the delicacy of young ladies, on that subject, as a piece of despicable affectation : or, to put the best construction on it, pitiable irresolution. That it is an awesome thing to pronounce an irrevocable vow is without a doubt; and that I shall be terribly frightened is as certain: but if I were to think of it for a twelve−month, it would not be less aweful, or I less afraid.

I knew you were above affectation, Charlotte, said Mr. Winterdale. I despise your young ladies, who having spread their nets abroad, to catch fellows, and having entangled one past hope of escape, draw back, and simper, and hesitate to name the day; as if it were the greatest condescension. I cannot charge Lady Winterdale with that grimace, however.

But, said my mother, I do not see how Miss Montgomery can possibly be married immediately. The consent of her guardians is necessary.

I will take that upon myself, said Mr. Winterdale.

Besides, resumed my mother, she cannot do without jewels, cloaths, and equipage.

I will take upon myself to answer that, said I; for I can do without them all.

But, said my mother, you can not do without a house; and that celebrated old castle of yours is not to be dressed out for your reception at a day's notice.

If I might presume to obviate that difficulty, said Montgomery, I should propose our going to London, immediately after the ceremony. My father and mother are there; and I should be anxious to present my lovely bride to them, if she had no objection.

It would be my wish, as well as your's, replied I.

Thanks were poor, said Montgomery. My life shall thank you. But there is another circumstance which cannot easily be got over, added he, addressing himself to Mr. Winterdale; unless you would have the kindness to undertake it, Sir; I mean settlements. This was exactly in Mr. Winterdale's way. That shall be my province, replied he. I will send for my solicitor directly, and we will consult him on the subject. He rang the bell instantly, and ordered a messenger to be dispatched for Mr. Liberal.

I observed Eleanor whisper Henry; who, as soon as his father was seated, said, I hope, Sir, you could have no objection to our going to London, with Mr. Montgomery and his bride.

I do not know that I could, replied his father. I believe your Eleanor may be trusted, even in that sink of iniquity; but I advise you not to keep her there above a month.

Oh Mr. Winterdale ! cried my mother, I must go to London! It is not in human nature to stay at home! Only figure to yourself you and I left alone in this dreary old mansion; the sensible Henry, the affectionate Eleanor, the sprightly Charlotte, all gone. What would become of us? You would not have pa"tience to let me beat you at backgammon. We should be reduced to a game at all−fours, and when we were both heartily weary, which would soon be the case, you would take your chair on that side the fire; and I should place myself on this. You would stretch up both your arms, and say, I wonder where Henry and Eleanor are now! I should yawn, and answer, I wish to God I knew; for then I should be with them. You would take out your watch, and say, It is but half past nine o' clock! A long while after, I should look at mine, and say, It wants a quarter of ten, yet! We should then wait with a mixture of weariness and impatience, till the great stable clock told ten; when I should ring the bell, and retire to rest after the fatigues of the day. You see it would not be possible to drag out such a deplorable existence. I must absolutely go to London, sha'n't I?

Now, said Mr. Winterdale, you have learned the proper language of a wife I will; shall I? You should certainly go to town upon such an occasion; but that you are made of a sort of stuff that will spoil by being there.

Try me, said his lady. Impose upon me any restrictions you please.

In the first place, then, I will go with you.

That would be my own choice. I appeal to yourself, if ever I have wished to go any where without you, since I became your wife.

So far is good. You have not. Secondly, you shall go to my old lodgings, near the Strand.

Near the Strand! repeated my mother. What can induce you to pitch upon such a situation as that?

Habit, answered Mr. Winterdale.

Then habit will soon reconcile you to a place near one of the squares.

No. I find the neighbourhood of the Strand agree with some of my other habits; and I shall not change it.

But I should be shocked to death if any creature one knew should find one out, in such a situation.

That is one of my reasons for preferring it; for my next condition is, that you shall not associate with any of the creatures you know.

Nay, said my mother, if you take me to the Strand, your last condition is quite unnecessary; for I would pop my head into the first hackney coach I met with, sooner than any of them should see my own carriage set me

down at home. Bat you cannot be in earnest, surely!

Yes; if your ladyship will agree to these things, and give me your solemn promise to observe them, I think I am in earnest; and will venture to take you to London for a month or six weeks.

And you absolutely will burrow near the Strand?

Take the Strand, or a game at all−fours, which you please.

In such an alternative I take the Strand; but I am really afraid such a foggy air will damp my spirits and sour my temper. However, I will do my best to escape from it. I'll drive about all morning, and light candles as soon as I come home. But pray what are you to do with Charlotte and Eleanor, and their spouses? Are they to take one step more, to the bottom of the Thames, or are they to chuse a local habitation for themselves?

There can only be a difference of opinion on one point between your ladyship and my father, said Henry. You may wish to enter into your former habits of living; he to prevent it. If upon looking into your own mind, your ladyship can sacrifice these, there can be no objection to our taking a suitable house, and all living together, during the time we are in town.

Will you be responsible for me, Henry? said my mother.

If your ladyship bids me, I will, answered Henry.

I do then; and you shall not repent your confidence. Mr. Winterdale, you will not object to my surety?

No. I will trust him now, and you another time; provided you do not disgrace your bondsman. But you must subscribe to one more article.

Name it.

Never to lay out more money than you have in your pocket.

That is a more barbarous prohibition than the other; but, as I hope you will always keep my pocket full of money, I promise.

As you keep your present resolutions, I shall know how to rely upon you in future.

Amen, said my mother. You see, Charlotte, what you must come to, if you wed. Your husband can take you an airing to Greenland; and deny you money to buy a fur tippet; and if you love him, as I do, you can only make a bow and say, just as you please, Sir.

Mr. Winterdale then asked me if I would trust him with the arrangement of my affairs. I answered, that they could no where be in so good hands; and his trouble would merit my warmest thanks. He left the room, to amuse himself with drawing up instructions for Mr. Liberal; telling Montgomery he should expect him to join them, on that gentleman's arrival. My mother retired to give instructions to Mrs. Horton, on a business of little less consequence, in her imagination; the preparations for her journey to London. And Henry and Eleanor went out to walk, without once asking Montgomery or me to accompany them.

In the course of my country correspondence, many are the trifling conversations I have related to you, and my only apology for so doing is the hope that they may have contained something of character, and not been wholly destitute of moral. I shall not now trouble you with what passed between Montgomery and myself; which, though

one of the most interesting to the parties concerned, would, probably, be one of the least so to you. It is sufficient to say that it was serious and tender. Our past sufferings and apprehensions, the present happy moment, and our future endearing and domestic prospects, passed in review before us; and the result was gratitude to the Supreme Disposer of events.

You will not hear again at present from

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.

Letter 61. TO MR. MENDALL, LONDON

Winterdale, Dec. 19, 1812.

Deer Muster Mendall,

I takes this hopperchunity of sending these few lines to ashure you of my sensere good will and affections; thogh god he knos I be so bissy that I dos not kno wich away to turn, myself: and if I had as manny eyes as Mr. Hardgrass, and as manny hands as Mr. Briers, and all them theer genttlemen that Master Henry yoosed to tawk on, in the time of is vocashon, when he comed from scule, I am foolly purswasive that I cold nither see ater every think, nor doo every think miself; tho I am shure I necklecks nothink as ever lys in my pour.

To be shure I has a hole happern ful o news to tell you, thogh you knos the best part on it beer foor and; becase why? you knos as hour young lady have got her shoot, god bles hur; and now hurs a great hair ass of ten thowsund a yere; and mutch good may doo hur, says I; for hurs never a bitt the prowder; but speaks has kindly to boddy as ever hur did afore. And now I am a gooing to tell you whot you does not know; for that kunning chap, yong squire Muntgumry rod all night from Uster, as sune a evver he knowd it, and comed, slap, dash, to mack shure on hur. I did hear say that he wold not have hur, when hur was pure; but he knos a wich side is bred be butterd on, and now he have snapped hur up. Howsever, hes a good gentleman, and be haves himself like a gentleman to wee sarvants; for manys the good hafe crown I has had of his mony; so god bles um boath together. And when hurd gin consent, master tuck matters in hand; and you knos he is not one as do things by haves; and he said as they shold be marrid imegteley, to kuer them o their hops and feers; and my lady said as how theer must be grate pepperashons o necklisses and sich like; but my young lady said as how hur wold be marrid, nolus, volus, if hur had not a rag to her back. And who cold say miss she did? Not I, by my truly; for I shold doo as much miself, if I had fixed my mind upon ever a yong man, and he shold ax me the queshton; thogh I must needs say I shold bring him sumthink hansum beside; but that is nyther hear nor thear. And master have settled every think for next tusdy as ever the lord shall send us; so you may think what I has to doo. But I has not told you hall; for Mr. Henry is to have miss Mowberry at the same time, and thay be hall to goo to lundon together. And then my lady said as hur shold drap down ston dead o the maygrums, if hur was to be laft all alone by herself with master; so, be twixt one and another, thay has noodled him into the jurney.

But the surprisingist circumstanshall of all is that I be to goo allong withum. Misis horton and Missis Robison and me be all three to go in a poshays, and you may beleeve that my poor hed turns round like a hotum poney. To be shure I has bin offens at hour town, and manny be the housen that be in it; but by what I can larn, it is no more compairable to lundon, nor farmer jennings pigsty to hour grand hall. I be paking up my clos, and trying to think of evry think, that I may forget nothink; and I has got missis robison to mack me up a smart cap, or too; and, I ashure you I has not spared nyther lace nor ribbin; and I has boght me a wite gownd; and miss doubledoo has sot up all night to make it. Missis horton said as how I mit get it mad at lundon; but I knod better nor that; for I wold not let the lunon fokes think as I was beholding to them for a good gownd; but I wold show um my sittiashon cold

aford me one at wom. If I thinks fitting to bye me another, whan I be theer, well and good; and if I can discovery anny smart yong parson as can make it, why, praps I may.

I thinks the verry deel be got ammong us; for I does beleef that fool Rafe, will marry jinney! the wench had the imporance to tell me too my face, the tother day, that hur did not valley hur plase; for hurd the ring in her pockkit! If hur does goo, I hops the lord will send us a better, if her binot quit so handsum; and if ever good fortin nocks at my door, I shanot stand in my own light, and say it nay. And so master be writing to give you ordures to provisson a come odourous house for us all, agen next thirsdy; and so you need not tack no notiss as I menchond it to you. But I begs you will not foreget a pritty snug rum for me, were us may all dine conveniable, and you and me may have a socionable bit of chatt, when misis horton and misis robbinson be attenshoning the ladys. And as you be privy legged in lundon, I shall take it kindley on you, if you will show me the lyons, and the monnyments, and Wess Mister Hall, and the grate guns ef Scent Palls and the Pallis. And in return for all favers, I will mend your stokings, and cut you the plum side of the pudden, and the brown of the rost mete; and do anny think els as evver lys in my pour, for you. Pleas to be so good as to ordur the beds to be well haired, and fire pot in all the rums, from dere Mister Mendall,

Your affactionat frand,

MARTHA STABLE

Letter 62. TO MUSTER WILYAM MENDAL

Winterdel, dissembur 1812

Dere Sur,

This cums uth mi dooty to yo, and to let yo to no how us be gooin on at this plas, beein as how misis stable be gooin to Lunon to morrer, and ool pot it in hur bocks, uf all hur fine flim flams ool gif hur lefe; for hur do tak a wacking passil o trinkelments suer enof. Wen mastr cum bak frum lunon and brot the gud neus o hour yung lady gettin hur own fortin, dad! I thot us shud a bin jompin owt in our skins for jy. And mastr sent owt too bottels o wind, into misis Stables rum; and hur acksit me inn to drinck mis mundgumberys yelth uth the ladys; and maddam horton drunck till hur fase was utha sun shyn; and most an eend yo nos it be bot dowdyish. And necks mawrnin, by brecksfirst, who shud pop is nose in bot squir mundgumbry, who galupped throo thick and thin; and I do sy his nose be a gad un; for hee cud smel ten thowsun of ear as for off as Ooster. Howsumdevr he nidna a bin so duberus; for owr swete yung lady was tru hartid, o spite o all is old fathers figarys and suspicions; for missis Horton lyde hur hear to the dooer, has yo nos she doo, now and tan; and hur syde as miss didna sty to be acksit twise; for hur hood hav im that blesid minnit; and mastr sed thy shud all be morrid togithur, to save time; and muster Henry sad thy hooden go to lunon citty: an mi lady sad as hur shud brake har hart o mollycolly, uf hur styd at wom, to ply at cards uth rnastr; and so thy be all a gooin.

And now do cum the best of all; for I has gee consent to morry jinney. The bagitch canted me up to by the ring, som time agon; and as morryin be the fasshon, why I wunnat be owt in it. I shad ha sot my mind uppon gooin to lunnon, as well as othar foks; uf it hodna bin for a thing or too; an won is I remembrs aberristy; and I shud ha bin affeard o the sharpurs and swinglurs, and monny drappers, as ran ravenin abot them theer bigg streets; for it binna onlikly as how thy mut ha bin too manny for me. Ann other thing is as I shal be laft e the powr of evry think at wom; for wan yo be gon an mastr be gon, hoo but me mun rule the roste? and anothar thing is I shal be hackst o chorch and be morried; and so I hops it be all for the best, blesid by god for it.

And wan I had ficksit my mind I gos into the stoody to mastr, to let him to no; for tho I be a fre born inglichmon, and can morry an hacks no leaf, yit I thot it hood be bot kind, lik, to gee him an inkling about the mattur; so I

maks won o my bettermust boughs, and I hordly nod how to bring it owt; an I sad, cur, sas I, I hops yo unna tak it a mis; but I has a bit of a mind o jinney hous made. You dunna no wot yo be dooin, sas he; yo ool hav yor wig pooled. Cur, sas I, hur mun pool pratty hord to get it; for it grows to my yed. Why how can yo mintane a wif an a passill o bratts, sas he. The brats mun com in gods own time, sais I; and I honna sarvd yor honner so lung but I has larned som o yor wys. I be wurth a gudish bit o monny; but, to be suer, it binna enof to kip me; but I has got a stowt pare o horms, and I mun ly my boons to wurk. Well, sas mastr uf yo han a mind to ply the fool, I shonna hinder yo. And so he do sy us shall have a bit o ground for a kow, and a litel hous to live in, and I shal be grum e time to come; and so god bles him sy I; for I shall gett my wif and my purfarmint at the sam time; an won mun help to kip the tather.

But my yed runs so o my hone afares, that I has forgot to tell yo as arter squir mundgumbery comd, I wus sent, as fast as hoss cud cary me, for mister libell, to mak the porchmuns as wor to bind um togather: and mastr he rot up to our yang lady's car johns at lunon. I dos supose thy be too genttlernen o the name o john, as be in care for her, and so thy be calld care johns; for I binna sartin as I spells the wurds quit rite; tho yo nos as I be tollable cute, and spels pratty parfit, kunsidering. And so all be reddy; the nams be to the porchmans; the carjohns has gee consent; and the rings and the lye sensis bin bot. To morer mornin parsin thaker do his wurk, wich ool be a bettr job nor the last he have had frum the hall; and ater brecsfurst my mastr and my lady, and skuire mundgumperry and is lady, gos in hour carrig; and muster Henry and his lady in a shease; and misis horton, and misis robbyson, and misis stable, and too banging troncks in anothur; and a sinfull looade thy oll be. And I gos tuelv miles to dyne ooth um hall, an than I coms bake, an robbud gos on. And god send me the grease to kip myself sober; for thar ool be so monny gud yelths to drink, that I do no as wind ool ron abot lik dych watter.

I has bin a riteing this pissel at bits and bobs, jest has I cud gitt time; for the minnitt I has anserred mastrs bell, in coms missis stable, or som otther o the ladys, to hacks me to quord a bocks, or tigh up a bundhill; for yo nos I be jack of all treads. And so, as mississ horton do sy, ovur her drinck, my the singhell be morrid, and the morrid be hapy; wich is hall at prisont frum

Yors to com and

RALPH RUSSETTING

Letter 63. TO MISS CASTLEMAIN

London, Jan. 21, 1813

My Dear Harriet,

It is one among the many privileges of a married woman to neglect the friends of her maiden days; and I have availed myself of this, my matronly prerogative, with regard to you. I have been a month in town, without taking up my pen. I chose to be enured to the weight of the new dignity that has fallen upon my shoulders, before I ventured to address you under it.

Mr. Winterdale, as I informed you in my last, had undertaken to procure the consent of my guardians, and the completion of the writings; and it is scarcely necessary to add that both were soon expedited. The following Tuesday was the day fixed upon by Mr. Winterdale for the celebration of the two marriages. When it arrived, he said to his son, On this happy day, Henry, I will make you a present of my animosity to Thacker. You may ask the scoundrel to breakfast. Neither you or your religion can require me to esteem him; and, if either did, it would be out of my power; but it is hardly decent to live at daggers drawing with the parson of my parish, and I will make him forget at your wedding the affront I offered him at my own.

Henry thanked his father. When the ceremony was over, Mr.Thacker accompanied us to the hall; and Mr. Winterdale treated him with the respect due to his station. I am sorry to say that this sudden change was almost too much for the weak head of the vicar, and that hatred gave way to a kind of servility which was not to the credit either of his heart or understanding.

The morning after our arrival in town, Mr. Montgomery here I find myself obliged to make a digression young women, in the gaiety of their hearts, may be permitted to speak of their flatterers and adorers by their surnames, only; but I have ever considered it as a want of propriety, if not of decency, in a married woman thus to designate her husband; I have made Montgomery my lord and master; and he is Mr. Montgomery with me, till a higher title shall descend to him. Now to proceed.

The morning after our arrival in town, Mr. Montgomery waited upon his father and mother. It is to be presumed that he found no difficulty in obtaining leave to introduce his bride. He soon returned; I was prepared for the interview; and stepped into Mr. Winterdale's carriage immediately. As I drew near the house I trembled; and could not conceal my agitation from Mr. Montgomery. I found my fortune could not support me, in my introduction to this aweful father of my husband. What then must have been my feelings had I entered his presence under his frightful denunciations, a beggar, and a tax upon his estate! I should have sunk under the load.

Mr. Montgomery soothed me; and, without reverting to the fortune, which, though justly, was only accidentally mine, he insisted upon my various merits, and the impression they had already made upon Sir James. The coach stopped; we entered the house; my husband led me up stairs; a door was opened; and I stood motionless, except the tremulous motion of my whole frame, before this terrific father. He took my hand and saluted me; but did not speak

Lady Montgomery received me with open arms; and congratulated herself upon the acquisition of such a daughter. Her son led me to a seat, of which I stood sufficiently in need; and a seasonable shower of tears came to my relief. I then perceived, what I had not been able to notice before, that Sir James's silence was accounted for by his emotion, which almost equalled my own, though it was not demonstrated in such a feminine manner. When he recovered himself, he addressed me, saying, I have to thank you, Madam, for the honour you have done us; but when I reflect upon the manner in which I last conversed with you, I am at a loss how to do it as I ought.

It would spare us both a painful recollection, Sir, replied I, if what passed at our last meeting were forgotten on both sides, and from this moment never mentioned more.

I cannot consent to that, rejoined Sir James. An explanation of my conduct, and an apology for it are both necessary.

If then you would have the goodness to express your thoughts on the subject now, Sir, said I, I should be very happy to dismiss it for ever.

Perhaps, said Sir James, I ought to say something in justification of my endeavouring to wrest from you what now appears to have been your right. I can only say that it appeared to me, and every professional man I consulted, to be mine; and an accidental discovery, unsuspected by any one, has been the sole cause of proving it otherwise. My son has urged against me the barbarity of stripping an unprotected young woman of what had been considered as her inheritance. This was an appeal to my generosity, not justice; and it appeared to me too great a sacrifice to make to generosity. And who was to require it? A young woman who was herself dissipating the property in question, by dishonourable measures! The most reasonable charge that could be brought against me was resisting the obvious compromise of our different interests, by the union between you and my son; when Providence seemed to have brought you together, almost for that very purpose. I can truly aver, and I have said it before, that, had you been only without a fortune, and without reproach, I would not have objected to it. But imagine yourself in my place for a moment, and say, would you have admitted into your family, the daughter of I

had almost said, an unprincipled woman; and knowing that daughter had inherited, or imbibed the character of her mother so far, as to have borrowed considerable sums of usurers, at the age of nineteen?

I certainly would not, Sir, replied I, if I had conceived, my authority was such as ought to controul the free choice of my son. Mr. Montgomery knows I always did expect an objection to his wishes, on your part, whenever you should be informed of my past conduct.

It was in vain, continued Sir James, that my son represented your altered sentiments and habits, when I considered that the newly adopted sentiments and habits were imposed by necessity, not conviction.

Pardon me, Sir, said I, interrupting Sir James. I own they were imposed by necessity; but that, aided by my attachment to Mr. Montgomery, brought conviction along with it.

I did not then reason like a young woman, replied Sir James; or even like a passionate lover. But I come now to what passed between you and myself at Aberystwith. You are aware that our meeting there was accidental; and that if I could have suspected into what company chance was throwing me, I would have avoided it, at every peril. My proposal, therefore, was not premeditated. In fact it was occasioned by the despicable boasts and falsehoods of servants, which I rendered myself more despicable than they by listening to. In my bitterness against what I imagined levity and coquetry, I even thought it a generous action to discharge your debts, on the trifling consideration, trifling as I believed it would be to you, of detaching you from my son. The noble firmness with which you refused my offer; the exquisite sensibility you manifested in your fears for Mr. Montgomery; and your candour in acknowledging your own errors; soon shewed me I had mistaken your character; and I left the room abruptly, lest I should betray my feelings.

I intreat, Sir, said I, with great earnestness, that the matter may rest here. All you have been relating is perfectly natural and consistent; and it shall be my future study to deserve those sentiments of esteem, I was then so fortunate as to obtain.

This is a subject so ungrateful to myself, resumed Sir James, that I shall gladly acquiesce in your wish to mention it no more; but I cannot quit it now, without adverting to another circumstance, which I perceive your delicacy wishes to bury in oblivion. What you have heard you can approve; and you would be spared a repetition of what your ingenuous mind must condemn. How shall I express my opinion of the threat I dared to utter? it was unworthy! it was unmanly! it was base! and, here, I most sincerely ask your forgiveness.

Sir James's voice failed him. I rose from my seat with precipitation; and, holding out my hand, which he took, This is too much, Sir, said I, I own that threat distressed me more than any thing I ever met with. I own it was the sole barrier which stood between my heart and the heart of Mr. Montgomery's father. I rejoice that you persisted in an explanation I would have given the world to avoid; as your condescension has effaced that cruel scene from my memory: or, if a trace of it should remain, it will be accompanied with the gratitude inspired by this moment.

I hope, replied Sir James, you will allow me to say, and the sincerity I have now used will induce you to believe, that it was only a threat; a contemptible trick to frighten you into my measures. I despise myself for having practised it; but I should abhor myself, if I were capable of intending to do what I denounced. It was what law might have permitted; but what justice, decency, and humanity equally forbade.

Dear Sir, said I, cease to accuse yourself. Dreadful as such an idea was to my feelings, I never censured it in such harsh terms as you do now.

One word more, added Sir James, and I have done. It was my determination, from the time we parted at Aberystwith, never more to oppose the inclinations of my son; and if he had addressed me again on the subject;

as, after a decree of Chancery in my favour, I expected he would; I should have left the disposal of his hand intirely to his own discretion.

Enough, Sir; and more than enough, said I. I believe you, as I hope to be believed myself. What an undeserving creature should I be, if I, whose claim to your esteem must rest upon the future, were not willing to forget the past! To have gained your good opinion is the highest satisfaction to me now; and to preserve it will be one of the first pleasures, as well as duties, of my life.

During this conversation tears trickled down the cheeks of Lady Montgomery; and the countenance of her son denoted a fixed anxiety and attention. By degrees other topics were introduced, in which they bore a part; and by the time dinner was announced, every one was at ease; except Sir James, whose unsteady eye not daring to encounter mine, shewed he was still hurt at his former behaviour. I passed the whole day with them; my natural vivacity returned; and, stimulated by the desire of rendering myself agreeable to the father of my husband, I did my best, and succeeded. Sir James, at last, wholly laid aside his reserve; and we parted pleased with each other.

How dear to me were the grateful acknowledgments of Mr. Montgomery, as we returned home! They would have made any sacrifice cheap; but they were the reward of following the bent of my own inclination.

I knew it! I always said it! cried he. My Charlotte had only to present herself, to win my father's heart.

I have since passed much of my time with Sir James and Lady Montgomery, in a domestic way. Sir James is a man of sense and honour; though his manners are not very conciliating. To me, however, he unbends; and I give it as a secret between ourselves, Harriet, that these men of sense and honour love those to whom they can unbend, and are very thankful for the pleasure it affords them.

Lady Montgomery has a good understanding and a mild disposition; and though there is no particular kindness in her husband's behaviour towards her, he appears sensible of the one, and does not presume upon the other. Her manner to me is truly maternal. I love her as the mother of Mr. Montgomery, and, almost, as my own.

Lady Winterdale has not broken through either of the restrictions imposed by her husband. She has sought no opportunity of meeting any of her former acquaintances; and, when chance has thrown them in her way, has avoided them. Her ductile mind seizes a family party to a play or an opera with the same avidity that it has heretofore grasped a grand gala which has filled her house. She cannot weave her own entertainment; but, if it will come ready made to her hands, she contents herself; whether it be composed of elegant, or coarse materials; whether it be furnished by a fashionable Countess, or Mrs. Thacker.

The same easy temper which has steered my mother clear of dissipation, during the last month, has made it extremely difficult for her to escape unnecessary expenditure. London abounds with pretty things, which are coveted as soon as seen. A moment's reflection excites a real want; and she is persuaded that all she thinks desireable is indispensable. It is true she has not purchased a single article without paying for it; but her insatiable cravings after jewellery and ornaments, millinery and lace, have been a constant drain to Mr. Winterdale's purse. He remonstrates; she argues, smiles, and prevails. She will run her course, till the exhausted patience of her husband throw a sudden and impenetrable barrier in her way.

How different is my cousin, the amiable wife of Henry! After pleasing her husband, her first wish is to please his father; and, sweetly tempered by nature, and moderate in all her desires, she has scarcely an effort to make, to accomplish it. When we attend my mother in her morning rambles; and India, France, and Great Britain display their rare and costly productions before us; Eleanor, to whom most of these things are new, admires with taste and discrimination; but, having selected what is proper and becoming, she is immoveable; and regards the rest as an exhibition, in which she has no interest, but that of a spectator. Mr. Winterdale is delighted with her; and how should he be otherwise; when she conforms to his opinions, adopts his habits, and prevents his wishes, so

naturally, that they all appear to be her own!

Mr. Montgomery has already quitted the army. We shall stay here another month; and then all return to Winterdale together. By the time I am at age, the castle of our ancestors will be ready for our reception; and my mother and Mr. Winterdale, Henry and Eleanor, have promised to accompany us, when we take possession of it.

On reviewing the events of the past year, the grand doctrine of *Whatever is is right*, seems almost as forcibly illustrated as in the tale of Parnell's Hermit. The improvement of my character was the result of my vexatious law−suit. My union with Mr. Montgomery was the consequence of a ball, which I thought it imprudence to appear at. The esteem of Sir James for me was founded upon an unworthy experiment of his own. Let not man, however, presume to do wrong that right may follow. So short−sighted a being would err in his calculations; and one evil would be the result of another. To produce good, evil must be directed by the hand of an all−wise and all−powerful agent. Let man, therefore, act according to the dictates of his judgment and his conscience and be assured that the event, whether foreseen, or unforeseen; apparently happy or unhappy; is not only for the general, but for his own particular advantage.

From a gay, unthinking girl, I take this wise epistle to witness that I am become a sober and reflecting wife. Be assured that the friendship is as unchanged as the name of

Your

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY.