DANGERS THROUGH LIFE:

OR,

The Victim of Seduction.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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DANGERS THROUGH LIFE

LETTER I.

The Marquis of Belville to Lord Clermont.

WELL, my enamoured friend, you have conducted yourself finely, to be sure!—I cannot trust you out of my sight, for a moment, without the danger of your going astray. Are you

mad with your declaration?—It is sufficient to ruin you totally, or throw you back for ages. One should attempt every thing with women, but declare nothing to them, unless it be an infidelity, or a desire of breaking off; in those cases, a confession becomes piquante, and, managed with address, may amuse one for a time.

You have great reason, my Lord, to congratulate yourself, truely!—The vanity of Lady Warwick triumphs; I will answer for it she has obtained all she wished; she has you now down in her pocket-book, and you will never get one step farther; you are henceforward numbered with the dead. I beg you will learn this maxim from

a friend, it will serve you for the rest of your life,—that when a handsome woman is certain of her power, the greatest pleasure she can receive is to see you miserable on her account; they are all most excellent comedians, and particular to a degree, with regard to the ceremonials of our first advances. But do not be angry if I tell you, Clermont, that mere ignorants only could proceed in the manner you have done.

And so you have not received any answer to your flaming declaration?—Prithee what reply could you have expected? You are no longer interesting to her; you no longer render unquiet her self-love, and her heart has nothing

further to say to you. Behold the consequence of travelling without a guide, and acting without consultation.

I can conceive but one method of repairing the mischief you have occasioned, if it is yet possible to be retrieved. For heaven's sake have done with your writing, and keep all your fine sentiments to yourself. My sister gives a ball, you know, on Monday; you and Lady Warwick will of course be there; so will that bright star in the hemisphere of fashion, Lady Emilia Edgeworth; you must make her useful to you on this crisis; it is but fair to make those we cannot gain, assist towards our gaining others.

Lady

Lady Emilia stands upon an equal footing with your enchantress, in point of figure; she has besides, the reputation of being very prudent, which, on this occasion, will serve the purpose; she is one of those factitious, formal beings, who affect the utmost propriety and decorum, and secretly enjoy the paltry pride of appearing insensible. She knows, the men wish her to be a coquet, and is vain of that desire; she assumes a disengaged character, and that is her species of coquetry. Such a woman necessarily commands respect, and very quickly forms her circle of all the gay young men about town; and you shall be one of the elect, who shall, through my interest, be admitted into it, if you will be advised. Be as

amiable in your appearance on that evening, as possible. Our scheme will be successful. But the divine Cecilia must be nobody upon this experiment; this will raise her jealousy. Rely solely upon me, I have spent my whole life in mortifying the vanity of women. Is it not necessary to correct her self-sufficiency?—This may teach her Ladyship another time not to neglect a civil answer, at least, upon a civil offer.

LETTER II.

Mrs. Fitzroy to Mrs. Delmond.

Grosvenor-Square.

ACCORDING to your desire, my dear aunt, I hasten to inform you of my arrival in town, and to obey the commands you laid on me, to inform you how Sir Charles Warwick

conducted himself on his return to town, which event took place two days after you left this for Springfield. Our dear Cecilia seemed so happy at the idea of my good man having allowed me to spend a week with her, that, knowing she could not prevail on me to accompany her, she seemed really to be as happy at home as if she had been surrounded by all the dissipation in the world. The morning after you left us, we were seated very rationally at our work, when Lady Darnley was announced. "Good heavens!"—said she, on entering—"what still a widow, and without a single creature to entertain you?"—"If I was a widow," said my cousin, "I ought to be so; but see, my dear friend, I have a charming

charming fellow on my knee;" looking down, with a Madonna smile, upon the infant on her lap.

"Well, but pray tell me, Lady Warwick, where is Sir Charles?—Is he still among the lords, grooms, and black-legs of New-Market—improving his understanding among the members of that polite coterie, the dog-kennel?".

"How you go on, my dear Lady Darnley," replied Cecilia, while a blush of (I fear) anger, at her husband's conduct, dyed her cheeks. It was more, I am convinced, the offspring of mortified vanity than of disappointed tenderness. However she had too much good sense to let this (to me) de-

testable woman perceive the origin of her feelings, and calmly replied—"I have this moment received a letter from him; he has left New-Market, and is gone, for two days, to hunt with Lord Belmont, but hopes to be in town to-morrow by dinner. He flatters me, by expressing regret that he cannot see me sooner; but he is obliged to keep his appointment with his friend."

"Lord, lord!" says the Countess, "how these husbands write to their wives!—Is it not enough that he shews he can be critically punctual, and cannot answer *exactly* when he can fix with his wife, but he must put it down, deliberate, in black and white?—I wonder at your patience, my dear!"

"My

"My patience, do you say, Lady Darnley? I am so desirous of pleasing my husband, that I would hold myself obliged to any one that would shew me how to make him more happy and free than he is; and if he is to instruct me in the art himself, am I to acknowledge less obligation to him than to a stranger?—I am perfectly happy myself; I am mistress of every enjoyment I figured to my own imagination before I married; and as I look upon Sir Charles Warwick as the fountain of these blessings, should I not love the author of my happiness?"—At that moment, my dear aunt, you would have gloried in your Cecilia; in her lovely face beamed the tender wife, the

fond mother, 'spite of all the flights fashion imposes. The artful Countess was not abashed at the polite hint she had received, but replied—" Well, but my sweet advocate for insensible husbands, should not your husband love you in return?"—" So he does, madam."—" But in what degree? You know I always speak as I think; it is my character, so don't be offended. Not in the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth degree; for first, he loves Gog Magog, prince of New-Market; secondly, Highflyer, his companion in the chace; thirdly, his bottle; fourthly, the dice-box; fifthly, a pretty opera-dancer I could name; sixthly, his favourite pointer; seventhly, that little

angel

angel in your lap; and eighthly, you, my dear, may come in for the gleanings of his affection."

Being quite a rustic, and unaccustomed to hear a person dare remark on the errors of a husband, in the presence of his wife, I was astonished at this effrontery, and not less so that Cecilia had not given her a reprimand, which would have stopped her further observations.

"Oh, fie, you wicked creature!" she replied; "how you let loose your rattling imagination against my lord and master. I am sorry to confess his regard and attention for some of those objects you mention; but my regard

to

to him is, I hope, too deeply fixed by duty, to leave room for a single reflection that would give me an unworthy opinion of him; when he is absent, I suppose him happy, and I resolve to try every means in my power, which you know are many, to make myself so till he returns. And *you know* I do not *mope* away my time; and, indeed, what right have I to expect more of my husband's company than falls to the lot of other married women? I should be miserable if he withdrew his love from me, but I do not wish for an apron-string husband. I never dreamt of the eternal billing and cooing, the love and dove of two imaginary turtles. I am persuaded, and am determined, to remain so that

Sir

Sir Charles is as fond of me as ever; let us, therefore, drop this conversation, and give me your opinion of the dress I mean to wear at the Argyll-rooms. It is well fancied; do you think I shall make a good Diana?"

"It is your own fault if you do not," replied the Countess. "How?" replied my cousin. "You have nothing in the world to do but make a fine branching stag of your husband, and let his own dogs tear him to pieces, like another Actæon."

"For shame, Lady Darnley!—You make me angry. I protest I will leave the room, if you name, or even hint at Sir Charles, any more."

"Well,

"Well, my dear! good morning. Remember your engagement to me on Monday; my ball will be a delightful one; bring your husband, if you like. Nay, in good faith, I believe he is not your husband, but is wedded to a brood mare, and the affectionate creature is gone to cherish his partner. Now, I vow and swear, in my opinion she would be too good for him. I would have him coupled with one of his own hounds, and let him spend his days in the dog-kennel."—Saying this, she quitted the room, and flew down to her carriage. How I detest this freedom of manner, which is so fashionable even on the slightest acquaintance! I expressed my astonishment to my cousin, at her allowing such a woman

man to take the liberties I had witnessed, with the character of a person, whom, however he might err, it was an impertinence *in any one*, however nearly connected, to notice before his wife. Lady Warwick agreed with me in this observation; but at the same time remarked, that she was the most agreeable woman in the world, and that she was so perfectly lively and clever, nobody could be angry with her, as she seemed to possess an exclusive patent to do and say, on all occasions, what she thought proper. I have, since this specimen of modern friendship, taken some pains to gain a true knowledge of her Ladyship's character; and find that she is considered both artful and agreeable in the highest degree. She is known

known to pride herself upon her knowledge of the world, and yet wishes, in some things, to have every young woman as knowing as herself. She is greedy of admiration; yet never happier than in promoting success to the wishes of any dissipated man, though she herself is not the object of them; in short, she is, of all women, the most exceptionable, as a companion for Cecilia at this moment (to her, I fear) of danger, and the last with whom she ought to have even an acquaintance, much less the slightest degree of intimacy: it can only be from her being fashionable, her vivacity, gaiety, and good-nature; it must be that has recommended her to Cecilia, whose own character is a mixture

of

of gaiety, vivacity, and good-nature, but varies, in one respect, from that of the woman she calls her friend, because hers is united to a perfectly innocent and unsuspecting mind.

The failings of Lady Darnley are not unknown to Lady Warwick; and had she lived in any other age than the present, she would have doubted the *propriety* of such a connection; but, in these days, the nice distinctions of this kind are utterly exploded. The effects of evil communications on good manners, is no longer in the mouth of moralists, or divines. They are turned over to the copy-books of children; and Cecilia, since her marriage, has found herself in a society that

that are too polite to exclude persons for differing in conduct or sentiments from themselves. She has, I fear, never considered the matter any further than, as she is not obliged to adopt the failings of her female friends, she is under no obligation to drop the connection. She finds no inclination to follow her example. She does not, therefore, believe that any improper intimacy can change her principles or inclinations; and, as Lady Darnley is like many others of the circle with whom she mixes, and is an implicit follower of the *world*, as it is called, she cultivates a friendship with a woman who is certainly caressed by many who so support the most unblemished characters. These sorts of persons are particularly dangerous,

dangerous, at this moment, to Cecilia, as she cannot but perceive the mortifying conduct of her husband in respect to herself; and it certainly is mortifying to a young and lovely woman, that others should see that even those charms which make most men who behold her acknowledge their superiority, have no power over the cold and now icy husband;—and also I plainly see, that even if she could remain insensible of the change, there are many, in either sex, who would open her eyes, and suffer her no longer to remain in a delusion, however agreeable, or less tormenting, at least, than such unprofitable knowledge. Amongst *those valuable friends*, Lady Darnley and her brother, the Marquis of Belville, appear

pear to me to be by much the most industrious. I was in hopes the return of Sir Charles would have removed, in some degree, the idea from the mind of his lovely wife that she was become so totally indifferent, as, from her conversation with me, I discovered she thought him; but I regret to say, my dear madam, that when he did come, it rather must have added to the mortification she before felt, than have diminished from it. It was past five when his post-chaise drove up to the door. He saluted his wife politely, welcomed me to the house, but did not appear in the best humour, for we soon found out he had met with a disappointment. The truth is, he had lost a very considerable sum of money; but

but that did not give him, he told us, half the uneasiness as he had received from the reflection that his favourite horse, Invincible, should be beat hollow. However, as he had not seen Lady Warwick so long, he was so exceedingly polite as to dine at home, though he assured us he had a thousand things to do, and persons to meet at the club.

Lady Warwick appeared very happy; asked him a number of questions respecting his journey, and told him all the little events which had passed during his absence, with a degree of vivacity and good humour which ought to have engaged the attention of any husband.

When

When the dessert came on the table, she said—"But, my dearest Sir Charles, you have not yet seen your sweet boys!"—and, ringing the bell, ordered the nurse to bring them to the dining-room.

"And do you hear, Thomas?" added Sir Charles; "bring that little puppy, that was sent me yesterday by Davenport. It is the best bred thing, Cecilia, that ever joined a pack."

He seemed, however, vastly pleased with his lovely children—gave them two or three affectionate kisses, and stuffed them with fruit; but, being soon sent to their nursery, and Davenport's present introduced by the servant,

vant, he kissed and slobbered the dirty animal for half an hour, and then fell fast asleep on the couch, with the dirty brute in his arms, leaving his lovely wife and myself to contemplate the pleasure of a conjugal state, or to reflect how it was possible that the same person could have been the most passionate of lovers, who was now become the most indifferent of husbands. Cecilia seemed mortified, and ready to burst into tears; and I confess I felt enraged, but was determined not to give her the additional mortification of knowing I observed the reason she had to lament her fate. While we were thus unpleasantly situated, his brother George came to our relief. "My dear Cecilia," said he, "I beg

you will not disturb the slumber of that sleeping beauty on my account; let him doze on;—but, for heaven's sake, what is that lies smothering in his arms there, and he is stifling with affection—it is not surely one of the boys?"

"No," replies Lady Warwick, "it is a puppy, Sir Charles says, of the finest breed imaginable."—"Upon my word, he has lately become the most extraordinary dupe to dogs and horses I ever met," said the good-humoured George; "the folly and absurdity of the whole jockey-club is not, when put together, equal to his. In a short time he will, I suppose, give up all his acquaintance except grooms or jockeys."

keys." At the close of this observation, in which Sir Charles bore a part with the music of his nose, coffee was brought in; and soon after he awoke.

"What, George here!" said he.—"I hope you are not unwell, brother? I do not remember to have before seen you sleep after dinner."

"Only fatigued," continued Sir Charles;—"'tis inconceivable what a scene of hurry and confusion I have passed through within these last six weeks. What with the regiment, the races, private matches, trials among my own horses—then joining our hunt, which drinks very freely, with several intermediate visits, where we have had

exceeding hard bouts, I have scarce had one regular night's rest since I saw you."

"I rejoice then," said his kind-hearted brother, "that you are returned to your own peaceful home."

"I wish it was in my power to indulge myself for a few days; but I am under the necessity of setting out to-morrow by four o'clock, as I have a young filly in training, at New-Market, that, with proper training, will win the whole world. I cannot, therefore, be absent; and I am afraid I must renew these journies every fortnight, for some time."

While

While he was uttering these words, as he sat with his eyes fixed upon the tea-table, his head reclined somewhat to the right shoulder, his lips closed, but pouted out as far as he could stretch them, his forehead knit, and his eye-brows lowering.

"Surely, my dear," said Cecilia, "you do not think of leaving me again so soon?"

But he was too intent upon the important business which was to carry him to New-Market, to hear any voice but that of a groom, who, at the moment, requested to know if the puppy was to be led to New-Market,

by one of the boys that was to set off in the morning?

"No," says he, "it is too young to travel in that way; its life too valuable to be risked. No, it shall go with me in the chaise;—and here, Tom, do you know what mare the bay filly was out of?"

"Black Moll," says Tom.

"Nobody," says Sir Charles, "will have any horses to run against me soon—I shall have the best steed in England."

"Then you'll win every thing, your honour," says Tom.

"True,

"True, Tom; I shall beat the whole world out of the course."—And then he returned into his brown study.

Tom left the room, Mr. Warwick looked grieved, Cecilia angry; and this scene continued till my Lord started up on a sudden, rung the bell, ordered his carriage at eleven, and informed us he was sorry he was under an absolute promise to meet Lord L—, at White's. He then retired to take off his boots, and Warwick asked Cecilia why she did not use her influence over him to stay at home?

"Oh, my good brother!" said Cecilia, "that influence is all gone; however wild and dissipated you and the

world think me, I can truely say I have ever made his will the rule of my conduct; and when I discovered that he chose to be governed by his own will alone, I determined never to interpose any wish of mine; indeed, I have ever been as happy in consulting his inclinations, as I should have been had I continued mistress of my own; and, before you and Mrs. Fitzroy, I may venture to declare, gay as I appear, the only anxiety which I have laboured to keep from the world, has been that, of late, I could not discover his inclinations, or his wish. He is grown so indifferent to me, that every endeavour of mine meets with coldness and neglect. This unmerited contempt stings me to the soul; and who

can

can wonder that I fly to the pleasures of the world to forget myself?"

Suffice it to say, my dear madam, we saw no more of Sir Charles for that night; Cecilia pressed me to accompany her to a supper party, at Mrs. Danvers'; and, as I thought she had met disappointments enough for one day, I consented. Lady Darnley, Lord Clermont, and the Marquis of Belville were there; the former appears a sensible, pleasant, and is, I fear, a dangerous young man, far superior to the butterflies of the day. The Marquis and his sister you know my opinion of, therefore I need not expatiate on them.

We returned to Grosvenor-Square early, and the next morning we heard Sir Charles was set off for New-Market. Cecilia said to me, the next morning—"Good heavens! my dear Fanny, what can be the meaning of this strange alteration in Sir Charles towards me?—that the same man, in the space of two years, should differ more from himself than one man does from another?—Tell me, my dear, am I grown so old, and those charms, in praise of which this man, whose understanding is now scarce better than a jockey's, was eloquent, so mightily changed from what they were, that he should thus endeavour to remove every particle of affection I may still feel for him?—However, thank heaven his cold

cold indifference shall never more torment me, if I can judge my heart; and, for th e future, I will be as cold as himself."

I endeavoured to reason on this point, and to open her eyes, if possible, to the danger of her situation; young, lovely, as she is—hurt at the conduct of him who ought to be her pilot on the dangerous sea of life, and who, for the present, had unthinkingly abandoned her to steer through it without his protecting aid;—she appeared more sensibly affected by my conversation than I expected, and promised me she would be particularly on her guard, that no levity on her part should balance his indifference.

I have now, my dear aunt, given you every particular. How happy I should have been had my communications been more agreeable. To-morrow I return to the Lodge; Mr. Fitzroy cannot, he writes word, give me a further leave of absence. Indeed I long, short as has been my absence, again to see him and my babes.—Adieu, my dearest madam!—Being most affectionately yours,

F. FITZROY.

LETTER III.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

WHY, my dearest Fanny, did you leave me at a moment when my heart, repulsed in the effort it had determined to make, to receive, if possible, the affection of *an indifferent* husband, was, from insult and unkindness,

kindness, from him who ought, for his own honour and future peace, to have cherished the pledge duty prompted me once more to tender him;—was, by his unkindness, again thrown back upon me, and I, of course, feel every tenderness others express with a degree of satisfaction, which I know is wrong. It is surely delightful to be loved by those who are amiable, and at a time when we feel ourselves neglected by those whom we have placed our affections on.—Oh, Sir Charles! why does your conduct permit me to find comfort but in your presence?—You, Fanny, know the disposition I possess. I can love ardently, fondly; but when I meet coldness instead of mutual tenderness, then

then my rebel heart shrinks from its duty, and turns traitor to the cause, and I voluntarily desert from a standard that, had I experienced the slightest tenderness, gratitude would have bound me to forever.

Start not, my dear, when I tell you, Clermont, the amiable, fascinating Clermont, has written to me. I felt a joy, mingled with terror, while I read his letter; for there is no possibility of allowing the smallest indulgence to the most delicate sentiment, without fearing for our honour. Hitherto I have combated my inclination; buried in the bottom of my heart, it has not yet appeared even to those eyes which had inspired it. Uncertain

tain of being beloved, I had only myself to struggle with; but now, alas! I must triumph over a much more formidable enemy. I have fortitude sufficient to endure my own sufferings, but can one afflict whom they love?

While I imagined him indifferent, I affected a coldness towards him; but now that I am acquainted with his sentiments, I can no longer answer for my demeanour; it will, I fear, betray me. Should I even be able to restrain my words, can I alike refrain my looks? When one loves, passion is visible in every thing; it speaks even in silence.

But how dare he presume to write to me? He knows the ties I am bound

bound in, and cannot be ignorant of the duties I owe them; he affronts me, if he can for a moment doubt of my fulfilling them.—Yes, yes, my Fanny, I will observe them; he shall not see my tears, or hear my sighs—nor will I from him accept of consolation. A favoured lover is too dangerous a comforter for a married woman; he heals with one hand, while he wounds with the other; and every succour we receive from him, but strikes the painful-pleasing arrow we would pluck from thence, still deeper in the heart.

My friend—my dearest friend!—what most disturbs and employs my thoughts, is the opinion Clermont may have formed of me. I perceive more

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ardour than sensibility in his letter; it is more lively than affecting, and seems rather the blaze of an inflamed imagination, than the soft emotions of a heart overflowing with love and tenderness. Barbarous man!—if he has not the idea of me he ought to have—if he believes the calumnies which the jealousy of my own sex have spread abroad, and which have been repeated by the humbled vanity and feigned pride of some of his.

This thought distracts me. If I possess not the esteem of the most amiable of his sex, what care I for his passion? The friend my heart elects, should avenge me of the wrongs I have received from others. Is it possible

sible that he should judge me with the severity of an unfeeling world, and have undertaken to triumph over me, merely from supposing it an easy conquest?—I feel the absolute necessity of flying from him—but shall I?—or rather, can I do it?—Am I equal to this effort, after what I have endured from my struggles, my dissimulation, my constraint towards him?

Perhaps he thinks me a coquet:—Heavens, how far am I from being one at present!—How often enchanted with his sight, insensible to every other object, incapable of pleasure but from his conversation, have I behaved peevishly, nay, disdainfully towards him? I have been often obliged to quit him hastily,

hastily, in order to conceal my tears; I distressed him by my conduct, while I was rendering myself more miserable by it. His image remained in the bottom of my heart, and constituted at once its torment and delight.

But tell me, my friend, what will become of me?—When next I see him, what expression can I give my eyes?—If he talks to me of passion, how shall I hide my own? or how reply to him?—This is the portrait of her mind, whom the world has censured as a woman of dissipation, and aspersed with many anecdotes which never had an existence, but in the malice of her enemies. She trembles now at the sight of him she loves, and

is afraid even of his idea ;—she invokes the aid of friendship to assist her reason, and reproaches herself as criminal, for entertaining a passion of which she only experiences the torments.

I call heaven and you, my friend, to witness that this passion, whose violence I have avowed, is the only one that ever yet engaged that heart which I once had devoted to Sir Charles Warwick, and which he never would have lost, had he not forfeited my confidence, my love, and my esteem, by the coldness, and often harshness of his conduct, which, latterly, he has not even thought worth concealing from others, as well as from myself.

I am

I am a fond and tender mother, and would, to the last moment of my life, have been an affectionate, obedient, and faithful wife, had he not, by the unkindness of his own manners, deprived me of the power of feigning a tenderness which, under the circumstances I am placed in, would now render it impossible I could feel.—Faithful I will ever be. Why was my husband so blind as not to respect these sacred titles? Why not cherish them with a warmth of tenderness equal to what I *once* experienced for the father of my innocent children?—But I am no longer dear to him; and when one is neglected by those who ought to love us, it is doubly gratifying to find we are yet thought capable of inspiring regard.

regard. Warwick cannot believe that his wife has ever deviated from her duty. The principles in which she has been educated by the most exemplary of parents, are his security on that head. Indeed I begin to think I am already so, by encouraging a friendship for any other man besides himself. I am determined to continue virtuous and respectable; and the very determination will supply the strength to remain so.

As a beginning of this painful strife of passion against principle, I have not yet answered Lord Clermont's letter. Perhaps this treatment may be too severe. An answer binds us to nothing; and it is but a harmless civility

vility due to every one. My silence may afflict him.—What do you think of it?—how ought I to act?—I do not ask to be resolved, therefore do not reply to me upon this article. Adieu, my friend!—I embrace you from my heart. I am going to a ball, at Lady Darnley's, where, no doubt, I shall meet the too amiable Clermont. Perhaps to morrow I may add a few lines to this already long letter.

LETTER IV.

Lady Warwick. (*In continuation.*)

Tuesday Morning, 6 o'clock.

WHAT a night did I pass! —My spirits are quite exhausted, my head confused, and my heart more agitated than it has ever yet been. Though sinking and oppressed

with fatigue, I cannot resolve to go to bed; I must write to you.—I shall not tell you whether the ball was magnificent or not—I have seen nothing of it; I could see nothing except one woman, whom Clermont continually attended, and seemed to be ridiculously occupied about—I defy you to guess her. One is not always prepared for such extraordinary events. I shall not get the better of my surprise for a long time.

It is not that she wants beauty, grace, wit—every thing you please; but her character seemed calculated rather to prevent than encourage addresses of gallantry, at least. Lady Emilia Edgeworth, as you know, is a declared

declared prude, at twenty; she has adopted a severity of manners, and a kind of methodical discretion in her whole conduct;—yet, after all, my friend, it required but one gay evening to make her forget her principles.—They were annihilated; she became intoxicated with the vanity of her evening's triumph, and seemed to enjoy it even with insolence. This gives me but a poor opinion of her understanding.

During the evening, the nasty Marquis of Belville never left her; and Lord Clermont—would you believe it, after his late declaration?—yes, he was one of her most assiduous attendants; she leant upon his arm—he

danced and chatted with her;—their dancing was admired to such a degree of indecency as never was heard of before. A woman of fashion to court applause, to render herself an exhibition, to expose her person as an object of public notice!—What say you to such an extravagance of behaviour?

As for Lord Clermont, you will be less surprised at his conduct, when I tell you he loves, and is beloved by her. This is not merely my own conjecture; I but repeat to you what has been told me:—the cruel secret with which I have been entrusted! it was the only subject of conversation at this detestable ball. Think what I must have suffered!—And this man writes

me

me word that he adores me!—What falsehood, what baseness!—What can he mean, or what idea has he formed of me?

How happy am I to have stifled my passion in its birth; at least, to have combated it, and not to have answered his letter!—What would have become of me, if I had written to him? He would certainly have betrayed the least advantage I might have given him over my folly.—Can you, Fanny, think he could be capable of doing so?—He, whose charming countenance expresses such sincerity and candour!—What a seducing air, and manner!—how formed by nature to inspire a confidence!

At the very moment in which I accuse this dangerous man, a secret impulse rises in my heart, that prompts me to excuse him; perhaps he has been instigated by that vile Marquis, the most worthless of his sex, whom so many weak ones of ours have thought amiable. If he has the least suspicion of my regard for Clermont, *he* certainly has suggested this pretty artifice. That profligate is capable of pointing me out as a subject of ridicule to the whole circle, merely to divert himself, and season the amusement of the evening at my expence.

But what am I thinking of?—It is impossible that the Marquis can suspect my regard for Clermont—nothing has

has yet betrayed it. But what signifies that to such a man?—He is of a suspicious nature; and, with his turn of mind, to doubt is to be certain, whenever it can answer a malicious purpose.

I know not what to believe, or how to act;—the surest and safest method would doubtless be to forget even the name of Clermont; no longer to receive his visits—to avoid meeting him—to forbid my own entrance into the houses he frequents—and to leave the field free for the full exercise of Lady Emilia Edgeworth's charms. She is extremely handsome, is she not?—and ought she not to carry off the prize?

All that provokes me, is her affectation of virtue, and the fuss that is made about it. Where is her discretion?—If you had seen her this night, how eagerly she devoured the incense, how solicitous of admiration—heavens, how she disgusted me!—I, who hate no one, was almost tempted to detest her. And why?—Perhaps she is not culpable after all; it may be only I who am so. I blush at the idea.

A thought has just occurred:—Suppose that, on this occasion, (it would have been highly improper before) I should write to his Lordship, and make him sensible of the affront he has passed upon me?—I write to him!!—His conduct is sufficiently clear, it needs

needs no further explanation, and ought to restore me to myself. I could never have believed that he loved *that* woman:—why endeavour to impose on me?

Pardon me, my friend!—I give way to my grief; I do not repent the doing so, as I am sure that it will force your sympathy. Adieu, my dear and only confident!—I am sinking under my sorrows; my tears flow fast, though involuntarily; and do not spring from pique, or resentment.

I have received your last letter; it is a true picture of yourself. Tell the General, with my love, I do not wonder he would not indulge me longer

with your company, when every action of his life is a proof how justly he values the treasure heaven has committed to his charge. Could I envy my beloved Fanny, it would be the possession of such a heart, to which she can safely fly for refuge and protection, without the mortification of knowing her tenderness will be spent with a coldness which must freeze a warmth of passion beyond the love of woman.

LETTER V.

Lord Clermont to the Marquis of Belville.

MY dear Belville! what a situation have you led me into!—Lady Warwick will certainly never forgive me. How beautiful she looked this night!—What dignity, without pride!

What grace, without affectation!—Lady Emilia is also handsome:—but, what a difference!—We admire the one, the other we adore; and yet, I did not speak a sentence to her!—You prevented my paying her that attention, which she alone deserves, and turned all my attention towards her pretended rival. What can she think of my behaviour?—I do not comprehend your schemes; I have a mind, nay, I die to justify myself. Notwithstanding my attachment to another, but for you, my heart would have been wholly hers. My cursed conduct at the ball your sister gave, has doubtless ruined me; I tremble at the thought. I have written to Lady Warwick, and

desired

desired leave to explain myself to her. Adieu!—I am going to rest, if repose be compatible with agitations such as mine.

LETTER VI.

From Ismena de Alvina to Lord Clermont.

I RECEIVED a letter from you, my beloved, yesterday; but what amends can writing make me for your long absence?—It is thee only I wish for, desire, and expect. How many ages

ages have I passed away, since thy presence has cheered my solitude?—I do not accuse your delay, I but regret it. The sun has not appeared here since your departure; the gloom is dismal, the cold of a spring in England insupportable.

I shut myself up in my chamber, your letters and your picture are my sole companions. I divide the hours of my lonely days between my harpsichord, my work, and reading; but thy adored idea mixes with all my occupations; and even in this convulsion of nature, happy in loving and thinking upon thee, my mind possesses that inward acquiescence which satisfies the soul,

soul, when it is entirely devoted to fondness.

I frequently converse with you, though we are separated: I talk to you, and think you answer me; your voice, soft as it is, seems to conquer the boisterous elements, and reaches my fond heart. As soon as you appear, the gloom and cold will all vanish. Happiness or misery mark the variety of seasons to me. O come, then! come, and realize my waking dreams, and give me back all that your absence has deprived me of.

Who is this Marquis you wish to bring to my cottage?—What have I to

to do with him, or he with me?—I am interested but for one single being in this wide universe. Need your Ismena add, my lord, my husband, that dear, that sacred being is thyself?—I scarcely reflect that there is any other. You know that rank and titles do not impose on me; I regard the statue, not its pedestal. I am insensible to every other pride but that of being loved by thee.

I think I remember to have heard you speak of this man; and, as far as I can judge, even from your own report of him, he is of an insignificant and unfeeling character. Far be this despicable species from us!—I can have no sympathy with such people;

our

our natures are not the same; their organs would be incapable of conveying their sentiments to my apprehensions, nor could I frame a language that would be intelligible to theirs.—Let me entreat you then to dispense with my receiving the visits of this your fashionable friend.

Heavens! what a thought has suddenly obtruded on my peace!—If you begin to be sensible of solitude, in my converse—if my society is become languid to you—if I do not fill up every void in your heart, as you do in mine!—I tremble at the idea.

You see the excess of my love and of my confidence. I would have

you

you read my inmost soul—see all its tenderness, and fear to make it wretched by suffering the least glimmering of suspicion to enter there!—You can take nothing from me without robbing me of all. If the slightest inclination towards another object could exist but for a moment in your bosom, there would be a final end to the happiness of all my future days; an insuperable barrier would surely rise between us, and render our separation eternal. No retreat could be dark enough to conceal my tears; they should be my only food till death. I despise those women who are capable of changing their affections; but more those whose weakness ever suffers them to pardon an infidelity. Such is my character.

I have

I have hid nothing from you—I have nought to hide; the more you know the heart of your wife, your Ismena, the more confidence you will place in it.

Would you know from whence proceeded the inquietude which appeared to dwell upon my mind when we were last together, and which it is only in your power to remove?—It arose from my having surprised you in a fit of grave reflection one day. Be never sad, my love; enjoy all the pleasures that are suited to your age; but now and then return to that tranquil felicity which is too delicate, in my situation, to bear either witnesses or confidents.

Thou,

Thou, for whom alone I breathe—soul of my soul!—why cannot I pass my life at thy feet, in thy arms, or by thy side, forgotten by the whole world, forgetting even myself, and unconscious of the value of my existence, but as it bears a price with thee?—Continue to love your Spaniard, for your own happiness, even to your latest sigh. You would never be able to replace her affection.

LETTER VII.

The Marquis of Belville to Lord Clermont.

AND so you do not comprehend my schemes?—I do not wish that Lady Warwick should forgive you; I would have her distractedly jealous, and furiously angry; while you shall

shall take advantage of her resentment, to fix her inclination. You must, my dear Lord, learn to torment a woman, till she is blinded by all the vapours of self-love; and then glide into her heart, under the very mist you have raised. In this strange cold country, women never yield till a parcel of little furies get into their heads. These imps are under my command.

You may be certain your divine Cecilia slept but little last night. Lady Emilia and you may divide the honour of keeping her awake. She thinks you on the best footing imaginable, with that prude whom I have transformed into a coquet; and if she has but a grain

grain of spirit, she will take her revenge by winning you from her. The rival shone last night; she will be the subject of discourse to-day. This is a misery too great to be endured, or forgotten. Avoid writing any notes, I charge you, or you will lose all the advantage of my *manœuvre*. My conduct, in this affair, is one of my finest *ruses de guerre*. Almost every person at Charlotte's ball was in the secret. Lady Warwick expected a triumph, which I have robbed her of with some address. Put a little spirit into your Spanish friend; it is absolutely necessary I should be near her at present, to conjure down the storm, and leave you in possession of that sweet tranquillity

quillity you have occasion for, to accommodate the transient essay of infidelity. Such a *civil employ* will be dull enough, for certain; but I look for my reward, from your success in both places at once.—Adieu!

LETTER VIII.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

I HAVE answered your letter, my Lord, because I know not what reply to make to it.—But as I now apprehend that Lady Emilia Edgeworth may think you visit me rather too frequently, I have determined to break silence,

silence, in order to oblige you both. Be assured I can, without pain, sacrifice the honour of seeing you, to the peace of her you love. Your Lordship will give me the credit for generosity, at least.

I even pardon the declaration you made me, and the insincerity also of those protestations. It would have offended me highly, if I could be affected by your sentiments of me; but the consciousness of my own integrity is sufficient to render me indifferent with regard to the opinion of others.—Yes, my Lord, after what I know, have seen, and was told at Lady Darnley's ball; undeceived, and highly pleased at being so; having nothing to

regret, but a prepossession, perhaps, too favourable towards you, I have nobody to pity but yourself. I hope you believe me sincere.

And now give me leave to say, that, in order to preserve the true zest of your passion, you should not make so public a display of it. Your indefatigable attention in pursuing the lady round the room—your eyes solely fixed on her, with the corresponding regard of hers—all, in a word, proclaimed what would have been infinitely more both to her honour and your own, to have a little more concealed.

I think it is not very long since your Lordship's attachment to her has

beco me

become a public topic of conversation. But I enquire so little about other people's conduct, that I may very possibly be mistaken in respect to the æra from whence you date your happiness; but if it be of a long standing (which I am by no means desirous to know) one must necessarily applaud the warmth of your affection, as it seems to possess all the blaze of a new-kindled flame.

Love Lady Emilia as much as you please; be constant to her likewise as long as you can. It appears perfectly natural to me that you should adore her, and consecrate your attentions to her alone. The world give her credit for wit; she has certainly an elegant

figure; and I have been told, and believe it, that she has some good qualities. But how is it possible that the happy mortal whom she has preferred, could be led away, to cast a thought or consideration on any other object; —that, devoted to an idol who merits all his tenderness, he should attempt to win the friendship and regard of a simple woman, who sought him not, nor ever shewed the least predilection in his favour; and who, all coquet as she may be deemed, never put herself to the charge of a single lure to attract him?

I fancy you will find it rather difficult to justify yourself upon this subject; and, though my vanity might possibly

possibly receive some degree of gratification from the attempt, I dispense, most freely dispense, with your vindication. It would lay me under the necessity of dealing falsely a second time, and I will not expose myself to the mortification of losing all esteem for you.—Adieu, my Lord!

LETTER IX.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

THE reports which I heard at Lady Darnley's, have been confirmed. She has since told me all the particulars of their attachment, as his friend, the Marquis of Belville, told it to her. It is but too true, my dearest Fanny, that

that Clermont adores Lady Emilia; but what must appear incredible to you, is, that this very woman is jealous of me—jealous to distraction!—and has said of me every thing that malice could invent; but she will not do so any longer. I have written to Lord Clermont; and even you will not disapprove my doing so. I have forbidden him to see me any more;—this is acting as I ought to have done. I will never be an obstacle to the happiness of another; let them mutually love, let them be happy together!—while my tears flow upon your bosom.

Clermont is then the most unaccountable of his sex. In rejecting his friendship, his tenderness, a blessing

I would have prized so truely, but now shrink from, expiring under the effort; it is not for myself I grieve;—that heart which he has rent, deserved to have been more highly prized. How I hate the man who has destroyed my doubts!—Every misery of a concealed affliction he has made me suffer; and he seemed to dwell with a cruel pleasure upon all the circumstances of this mortifying relation.

I did not question him whence proceeded this effusion of the heart, this unsought confidence, this malicious joy?—If he should be an emissary of the Marquis of Belville; if I have been deceived—no matter: I adopt, I embrace with rapture, every thing that

that can strengthen my reason, and furnish me with arms against an object too alluring: if it be possible to aggravate his faults, and inspire me with horror at my own, it is, I feel, necessary that I should think him guilty; I tremble lest he should not be so.

My mind is a perfect chaos, my ideas all confused—I cannot separate or distinguish them; fear, indignation, the violence of my struggles, their inability, a sort of hope, and a kind of remorse for that hope, the resolution of my projects, the instability of my vows, the misery of not being beloved, and the fear of his not deserving to be so—Oh, my friend! all these arrows are deeply lodged within my breast.

I shall see him then no more!—My letter was very coldly written—hardly civil. I wish I had not sent it; it would have been better not to have written at all. This was an unpardonable measure; if he should interpret it to my disadvantage.—I am an ideot, I detest myself; surely I am a pitiable object!—Yet I excite envy; and Lady Emilia Edgeworth is jealous of me.—Adieu! adieu!

LETTER X.

Lord Clermont to Lady Warwick.

CAN I believe my sight? — and is it you, adored Cecilia, who have written the letter that contains my fate? in which you have pronounced the severest sentence, and doomed me, solely from appearances, which you ought not

not to have interpreted so cruelly. You have made me feel, in the extreme degree, the torment of loving against one's will; of loving without hope, of being condemned to misery, and of being capable of inspiring nothing but disdain; and all that now is left me, is the wretchedness of adoring you still in vain. No, the man whom you have condemned, and forbidden to see you, who was always displeasing to your sight, is not unworthy of your esteem;—in pity to the sincerest sorrow, deign but to listen to me. I do not now, nor did I ever, love Lady Emilia Edgeworth; I never was so fortunate as to be able to make an offer of sacrificing her to you. If I followed her at Lady Darnley's, it must have been

been owing to some delirium, for which it is impossible to account.

It was you, and you alone, that was, alas! the idol of my worship. I confessed my passion to you, because I could no longer conceal it; and, perhaps, you would not be insensible to my sufferings, if you could but read my heart, and see how strongly your image is impressed upon it. From the time that I dared to write to you, I have not known a moment's peace. I am certain that my passion can only render me unhappy, but, alas! I am not able to oppose my destiny.

Attractions too powerful to be withstood, dwell on your lips, and in your eyes; your motions, your conversation,

tion, even your very silence, all are irresistible; you act with the same force on the imagination, as on the senses; no shield can be interposed to your fascinating charms, it is impossible to elude their enchantment; an undefinable grace attends your every attitude, and accompanies your every action; in fine, it is impossible for you to do any thing which is not of itself sufficient to enslave the hearts of all who approach you. If you appear serious, we become enamoured of gravity; and when you assume cheerfulness again, we rejoice in mirth. You have a thousand modes of pleasing, equally infallible, though different all.

Cease, oh, cease to think me false! Overwhelm me with your severest anger,

ger, but pity me notwithstanding—you ought, for I deserve it. There are, Lady Warwick, situations and circumstances where even virtue may become the torment of that heart which cherishes it.

Recall to your memory, the eager anxiety with which I sought to become acquainted with you. The recollection of my respectful assiduities, may perhaps remind you of your own coldness. Did I say coldness?—rather of that animosity with which you declaimed against me, in a circle who looked upon you as an oracle, and received all their sentiments from your impressions. Your Ladyship will en-

joy the recollection, as an addition to your present vengeance.

What have I done to deserve your hatred?—Suffer me, I entreat you, to endeavour to destroy those unjust prepossessions you have formed against me; since you have interdicted me your presence, in pity to my sufferings give me leave to write to you, at least. I will not dare to hope for answers to my letters; allow me but an opportunity of repeating to you a thousand times, how much I am devoted to you; believe that Lady Emilia had never any power over my heart; and it is sufficient, to be acquainted with you, to be assured she never shall.

LETTER XI.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

LET the whole universe be laid at the feet of Lady Emilia Edgeworth; the sole object, in whose fate I am wholly interested, is not, nor ever will be there. He is not guilty; we have been unjust. You seemed to accuse

cuse him with a spiteful earnestness I did not think in your nature. More timid than the Marquis of Belville, you say, he is to the full as unprincipled. This suspicion was too cruel. What has he done to offend you?—You almost broke my heart.

Forgive me, a thousand times, forgive me!—I owe you the sincerest gratitude, and I am repaying you with reproaches. I sought the aid and consolation of your friendship, and I now complain that you were kind enough to grant it!—I no longer know what I say, or what I would have. I deserve your pity; you will excuse me, my Fanny, and not abandon me to the distractions of my mind, much less to

the

the emotions of my heart, which I have more cause to be apprehensive of. It is there the enemy is lodged—it is there his image is engraved, too deeply, I fear, ever to be erased. I am sensible that I adore him. You now see my weakness; but you shall, for the future, admire my fortitude.

I leave you at liberty to *say* all the ill your conscience will let you, of Lord Clermont; but I forbid you to *think* any. He does not love Lady Emilia; I cannot, therefore, conceive the cause of her triumph. She is not quite handsome enough to turn people's heads; in truth, I think her but moderately so. You may be certain that he does not love her; he has

sworn

sworn to me that he does not. He has so much honour, and such an appearance of sincerity, that it would be impossible to doubt him. The style of his last letter has affected me so extremely; it paints the tender sorrow of his heart, which is now transfused to mine.

My friend, my dearest friend!—how dangerous is he now become, that I have nothing to reproach him with! He desires leave to write to me. After my unjust suspicion, ought I to wound him further with a refusal, which might drive him to despair?—What will he think of it?—I cannot determine upon any thing. How painful is the strife between prudence

and

and passion!—What trouble will it cost me to hide mine?—It increases every moment, and triumphs over my reason. Alas! I have none left. I see, as it were, through a mist, the formidable duties which bind me.—You have yourself loved, and fortunately your affection has met a return; but if it had not, you may conceive what your heart would have felt, and, on that account, make some excuse for an infatuated friend, situated as I am, with nothing to expect from him who ought to meet my tenderness with equal warmth, but slights and indifference, not to say disdain, because he knows I am his wife,—and that my principles will prevent any glaring impropriety in my conduct, which

which might bring reflection on him and his children: for, believe me, his unfortunate wife has no further interest in his mind than as she either flatters his vanity, or adds, by her means, to his expenditure, which, by the large fortune my father left me in my own disposal, you know, I am enabled to do: thus, by his own means, deprived of the possibility of fixing my tenderness and confidence on him, I, unfortunately, for my own peace, have sought a sympathising friend, too dangerous, I fear, for my present and, perhaps, future peace.

How can we avoid loving those who love us?—or, at all events, those who tell us they do so? When the men to whom

whom our happiness has been pledged for life, either tyrannize over or abandon us?—Our sole relief, in either of these cases, is our tears; we, for a while, find in them some consolation; by degrees they become less frequent; repeated insults dry their source; the heart fatigued in effectual sorrow forms pleasing visions to itself, and seeks an object that may realize them.

The wished chimera, the mistaken idol, at length appears; emotion and confusion announce its presence; one fears and flies from it, but, even in our flight, we meet it still; the arts of seduction cover the purposed injury, and we become less guarded every day, till, standing on the very brink of the

precipice, we only see the flowers that conceal it. Alas! how is it possible to escape; surrounded with smiling snares on one hand, and by unkindness pressed into the toils, on the other?—We are always more to be pitied than condemned, as our faults generally arise more from our misfortunes than our vice.

Adieu! I am willing to accept of all the miseries which attend on Platonic love; the effects will be dear to me, on account of the cause.

I have this moment recollected that I am under the necessity of replying to Lord Clermont's letter. He has been told that I have said the most horrid

things

things of him!—There are odious people in the world!—It would be dreadful to leave him under this mistake. He believes that I dislike him! Yes, he believes it!—Oh, he shall never read my heart! at least, I hope so. But there is no law in morals, which can oblige me to hate him, or suffer him to think I do.

How I feel, amidst my own sorrows, for those the imprudent conduct of Lady —— has brought upon herself, and her innocent children. The circumstance was mentioned at a supper at Lady Darnley's, last night. Lord Belville mentioned the elopement had taken place; I, like a novice in the ways of the great world, which I cer-

tainly ought not to be at this time, inadvertently exclaimed—" Poor creature, how I pity her; she is ruined, undone, lost for ever." Lady Darnley (I dislike her as much for the observation, as I do her good-for-nothing brother) exclaimed—" Ruined, undone, lost for ever!—My dear, what then? Are there not hundreds in this town, ruined, undone, lost for ever, as you call it, who are the merriest, liveliest, and most agreeable people in it?"

" But my dear Lady Darnley," said I, " 'tis a poor consolation for the loss of what every woman ought to hold most dear—reputation. To men of honour, endued with social virtues, exile has ever been esteemed worse than death;

death; but to be driven from our country, our friends, our children, bears no proportion to the misery of living in our country, odious to our companions, despised by our friends, and a disgrace to our children."

"Very fine, Lady Warwick," said the gay Countess; "you have made a tour to Rome, and lived backwards above two thousand years, in a few seconds of time, to import a cargo of examples suited to your present doctrine. Perhaps, my dear, your notions of reputation, love for your country, your friends, your children, might be all blended together in some Roman matron of old; whereas we find the female would-be-suicide would

rather lead a life of misery without hope, than be exposed by law, made for that purpose, without a shift after her death. But consider, Lady Warwick, where we are; you are in England, my dear, and in the year 1809, when your country, your friends, your children, have but little to do with your reputation, unless you are fortunate enough to be dependent upon the smiles and favours of the world. Be assured, my dear, Lady—— will be a nine-days wonder. Let foolish scandal have her hums and haws, her shrugs, her shake of the head; let the prude pity, coquets titter, demireps censure, and the newspapers squib at you for nine days; you have then passed through the state of your purgation; you have performed reputation's quarantine,

rantine, and you'll be received again by people of all rank (Court excepted), as if nothing had happened. And as to the men of the present day, lord, lord, they have hardly changed the sentiments of the nursery. The poets were right in making Cupid a child; his votaries are all children now-a-days, or they would not be so easily discovered;—miserable for a new toy; pay even ten thousand pounds to get it, then miserable till they break it in pieces; and after that, miserable till they get another." Do you know, I now dislike this unthinking, giddy woman, for her sentiments. It may be, perhaps, a useful lesson. I will ever, I trust, attend to the dictates of prudence and virtue; for never would

I survive the loss of character, to have, by one act of imprudence, my name the food of hungry tale-bearers; the topic of discourse in assemblies and coffee-houses; to see the finger of invidious scorn, the palsied head of pity, and the prudish shrug of mean hypocrisy, wherever a woman so unfortunate is met. Who could bear this mortification? While we are of the world, disguise it as we may, we cannot bear the sneers and frowns of the world with indifference. This, I know, is not the general opinion: on the contrary, it is said, those who stand self-justified, smile at all attacks, and defy the edge of keenest calumny.

With men, I grant, this may be the case;

case; but no such fortitude ever dwells within a female breast. It is so characteristic of our sex, whenever such fortitude is found in woman, whenever she shrinks not at the reflection of a blasted reputation, whether the cause be founded well or ill, she rarely weighs the sanctity of means, whatever is her end.

LETTER XII.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

I THINK it necessary to answer your Lordship's letter, as I wish to vindicate myself from an accusation, or rather contradict a falsehood contained in it. It may be possible to be more delicate upon such a subject, but it

it would be difficult to be more sincere. Most certainly it is not true that I spoke ill of you in any circle. You have been imposed upon; you have been credulous, and, above all, unjust to yourself. I can hardly pardon you this error; I shall be more indulgent, as far as I am myself personally concerned.

I perceive, my Lord, that you are totally ignorant of my character; they have given you a false idea of me; perhaps you should not so readily have adopted it. I am not indifferent with regard to your opinion of me; I am pleased at having an opportunity of telling you, that I detest every species of calumny, and pity those who are

capable of it. The persecution I have suffered from it myself, has not yet soured my temper.

Be assured, my Lord, that I have ever been tender of the absent; I would not speak severely of them, though they had even offended me. If they had virtues, I would acknowledge them; one may do justice to merits, without abating their resentment of injuries. Nay, I can take the part of my sex, though they be ever so handsome; I speak with favour even of the faulty, and with fondness of the more perfect. Your Lordship had reason, then, rather to have expected my eulogy, if ever I had mentioned your name.

I had

I had almost forgotten to speak of the divine Lady Emilia Edgeworth. There is no end of explanations:—what can I say on this subject?—I gave credit to the public report at first; perhaps I should be in the right were I to continue to do so. You have assured me there is nothing in it.—What then?—One is so often deceived, that it is hardly possible to believe any thing one hears; but what makes you so uneasy at the rumour?—she would do honour to the choice of any man. As for my own part, I cannot retain any further suspicion, without doubting your word; so let us talk no more of the matter.

Your requesting permission to write

to

to me, has extremely embarrassed me. Circumstanced as I am, should I refuse, you will persist, you say, in thinking me your enemy; you will suppose that my dislike has occasioned my refusal of your proffered friendship, and I shall become an object of your resentment.

Well, my Lord, I will afford you this proof of my esteem; and the style of your letters will inform me whether you are worthy of it.

LETTER XIII.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

YOUR letters oppose me, my friend, but your silence afflicts me.—It is all over; I am now irrevocably attached. I have written to her, and been answered too:—but, alas! what

are

are our enjoyments when attended with remorse?—That which I feel is horrible in the extreme!—I languish after what I dread to obtain; I fear the being happy, and yet tremble lest I should not be so.

I have received the most affecting letter from Ismena:—I almost defaced the writing with my tears. Like the Hyena, I first weep, and then betray! She is incapable of suspicion, she kisses the hand that is raised to plunge a dagger in her heart; she is far from thinking me inhuman. How unfortunate is her situation!—but is not mine still more so?—Nevertheless, if my present passion be only a caprice, the prepossession of a moment——

Lady

Lady Warwick doubtless is such as she has been described; and in this case, as you have already said, her reign will be but short; and that once over, my lovely Spaniard's will begin again.

How beautiful was Lady Warwick at Lady Darnley's ball!—how infinitely superior to every woman there! How totally did she eclipse them all! —and yet, wretch that I am, I am reduced to wish that this charming object may be deficient in honour, in principles, and degrade herself by a momentary foible, without having even the excuse of passion to plead in her defence.

The

The more I am attached to the virtues of the one, the more I am compelled to wish the other may have none. I am ashamed of my own baseness—I blush, and yet persist:—fatal delirium of the human heart!—inexplicable weakness!—Pity your friend, my dear Neville!—But I exaggerate my failings; who is without them?—Even you, in my situation, would act as I have done. Is it so great a crime to aspire to the possession of the most lovely woman upon earth?—Pleasure is the deity of youth; to him we ought to sacrifice; nor is cold reason virtue.

LETTER XIV.

Sir Frederick Neville to Lord Clermont.

YOU reproach yourself, you blush, your soul is sorrowful, and yet you continue to persist in your former resolutions!—To what purpose then serve those secret hints which you receive

ceive from that delicate and just monitor, your own heart?—if they have lost the rein, what restraint can I further supply? But the season of advice is past; it is the voice of friendship only that can now be heard; it is hers to comfort the heart she cannot cure. I would most willingly sacrifice many of the happy days of my own life, to save you from some of those wretched ones which may probably attend on yours. The folly of a moment has often been the source of tears which time itself could never dry.—May I be mistaken, and may you be happy!

LETTER XV.

The Marquis of Belville to Lord Clermont.

WELL, my dear Lord, did I deceive myself?—and has the ball failed of its effect?—I was very certain she would write to you. Every thing is now made easy, and you remain master

master of the field. You may now proceed as briskly as you please, and not weary one another with the tedious formality of a first address. Let me entreat you not to be too prodigal of your letters. If you answer one in four that you receive, it will be quite sufficient; but more especially avoid all parade of sentiment.

You may pretend to be angry, affronted, and to reproach her; and be sure not to fail insisting on her justification. Women are never on their guard, when they write; they furnish arms against themselves; they become familiar with the tender passions, and, inditing to the lover, the pen always turns to an arrow against their own

breasts.

breasts. We lay hold of every thing they say, interpret as we please, date the progress of their passion, and are able almost to name the day of surrender, at the time they think the least about it.

I am going this evening, with the ———, to Brighton, where I propose remaining a week at least; let me have a good report of your proceeding, addressed to me there. Remember I shall expect, on my return, that you have brought this affair to a conclusion; for surely you have time enough to effect it. I allow you a whole week, that you may act according to the exactest rules of decorum. After that, we shall have nothing to think of but the

the mode of publication, which is more essential than is generally imagined. I will take charge of the whole of that business, only letting you into the secret of that kind of artful, indiscreet silence, which dishonours the woman, while it leaves *us* the merit of behaving well.

Your Ismena then, you say, will admit of no *tête-à-tête* with me; she is certainly a mere savage.

LETTER XVI.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

WHAT is it you complain of? I have permitted you to write to me, and have, at last, promised to answer your letter. This is doing more, perhaps, than I ought, and certainly is all that I can allow you; but you are un-

 reasonable,

reasonable, extremely so; and that disposition is revolting. Good! I had almost forgotten another cause of resentment I have against you! How comes one to forget things of this kind?—And so, my Lord, "it is from pride, then, as much as from reason, that I fear to love?" What a charming idea! and how very advantageous to me!—Let us pass lightly over this reproach.

My children, my toilet,—(let me, while blushes of shame dye my cheek at the avowal of a truth my heart at this moment reproaches me for, confess, that the latter is now my most serious business,) you say, entirely engross me. Learn from me, that I am actuated by principles which are not known or understood,

derstood, and that my outward appearance is by no means to be relied on. My Lord, I beg you will never tell me again, that love is a beautifier; that it gives a charming expression to the eyes, and renders the whole person interesting. Notwithstanding this curious discovery, my heart shall preserve its freedom, and do its duty.

You ask me if I shall be at home this evening?—Yes: for, having a severe head-ache, I have asked a few friends; and, (as I want to scold you,) if you pass through Grosvenor-Square, I know your company will be an agreeable addition.

Do you know, my Lord, I am seriously inclined to do so? You have already far exceeded the bounds within which you promised to restrain your correspondence.

LETTER XVII.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

WHAT a mighty pleasant visit you honoured me with yesterday! How very trifling, how improper was your conversation!—Do not think, my Lord, that I shall quickly forget it. You presumed to tell me that you

loved me: had I been inclined to believe you, (but you know the contrary) I should have been covered with confusion. For four hours together you talked to me of my charms, and such nonsense; of the poignant delights of infidelity, and the pleasures of inconstancy; and all this, with a warmth as unbecoming even as the subject of your discourse.

I acknowledge, and with heart-felt sorrow, that the affection I should have entertained for my husband, has been weakened by his own conduct; and, from the austerity of his manners, I *fear*, where I expected only to *love*. The one sentiment, in the breast of a woman, is alone sufficient to exclude the

the latter. But tell me, my Lord, what you have discovered in my conduct, that could authorize such a conversation?—I received the foolish declaration of your love without resentment—with the most perfect indifference. One may act strictly up to the rules of prudence and honour without affectation, without ill temper, without ostentation. If I am at all acquainted with her, Virtue is mild, her enjoyments are confined to the heart which she inhabits, and her pleasures are hidden.

It is true, my Lord, indeed, that I have answered some of your letters; I thought I might safely do so, and that this proof of my friendship would augment yours. I know also, that the

world speaks hardly of me, and I bear their injustice patiently. Your sex is vain, mine envious; yours cannot forgive a denial, mine wish to monopolize adoration, and charm with an exclusive privilege. When these motives of resentment are united, they give birth to slander, which imposes on weak minds, who far outnumber the rest of human-kind. But there are some noble souls that are not carried away by the torrent; who give themselves the trouble of examining coolly into motives, credit only undoubted facts, and who, when once they have formed their opinions, adhere to them. Such were the sentiments I expected to find in you:—it seems I have been mistaken.

Adieu,

Adieu, my Lord! — How vastly should I have been indebted to you, had it been necessary to have put me on my guard against your kind of passion. Happily, that was needless; I say happily, because it sets bounds to my acknowledgements.

LETTER XVIII.

Lord Clermont to Lady Warwick.

DO not, my gentle, my adored friend, overwhelm an unhappy wretch, who is already more miserable than you can conceive. He has displeased you; his own heart is your avenger. If you could have looked into that, even

even in the moment he held the conversation which has raised your resentment against him, you would then have known how very far he was from meaning to offend you. I was no longer master of myself; the charms of your conversation, those of your person, inflamed my senses, deprived me of my reason, and threw me into such an ecstasy as I never before had experienced.

Yes, I then said that the most adored woman in the universe would have every thing to fear, were you to become her rival; and that inconstancy, though even a crime in love, would cease to be deemed so, were you the cause and object of it. What can I say,

but that I was born to idolize you? Even your severity cannot subdue my passion.—If you knew all that I have done to conquer the ascendant you have over me, you would pity me; you would think me worthy of your indulgence, rather than your resentment, and would be shocked at knowing the distractions of my mind.

What a letter have you written!—Your contempt alone was wanting to complete my misery!—Your contempt!—and do I live to know that you despise me!—Yet, sinking under that mortification, I prefer it to the doubts which you express of my friendship. Can you suppose it possible that I do not feel your virtues, your attractions?—

tions?—I who discover in you, every day, such qualities as increase my passion, but augment my despair, and render me a wretch indeed!

I almost wish that I had never seen you.—I wish—O, pardon the extravagance of love, of grief, and of remorse! My anguish is extreme:—O, deign to mix your tears with mine, but hide them from me!—Were I to know, that your compassion had extorted but a single drop, I could no longer answer for myself. Yes, my divine friend, know that your indifference is not sufficient, but that your hatred is necessary, to compel me to obedience—to make me hide the insurmountable passion, the ardent vows,

which

which you disdain to accept, and are offended even at the mention of.

Yet suffer me to see you once more, this evening; deign to be witness of my sorrow; it will soften your resentment, if you are not inexorable. Fear not, that now, or ever, I shall presume to speak to you again of love. I shall summon fortitude sufficient to suffer in silence, and submit to your decrees, as to those celestial intelligences, who are adored in thought alone. In confidence of this strong effort, do not refuse me this small request.

LETTER XIX.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

I ANSWERED your letter last night. I believed your penitence sincere; and yet you seem to be dissatisfied. For heaven's sake, get the better, my friend, of your grief, and do not appear to be always unhappy. I

am

am far from being insensible to the misfortunes of those I regard. You say, I make no allowance for their foibles! and do not do justice to their hearts! and if I am apt to offend them by my frankness, I have honour and resolution sufficient to defend them from others.

For instance, I maintain to all the world, that you are a very sensible young man; and yet you know that I could prove the contrary, if I pleased. What ailed you yesterday? you were so woe-begone!—I cannot set this down to my account. I should be very sorry to have been the cause of it. Without doubt, it is not in my power to conquer your melancholy.

I con-

I conjure you, therefore, to think of me only as a friend, anxious for your peace. I should be miserable at the idea of giving you the smallest pain.

Notwithstanding your solicitations, I will not go to the opera this evening. Don't you think that I am a little whimsical?

LETTER XX.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

AFTER all you said to me, Neville, I paid a visit, last evening, to Lady Warwick; but our conversation, though the most lively that we have had since this unfortunate attachment,

tachment, weighed heavy on my heart. I was so out of spirits, that she perceived it, and reproached me with it by a note, this morning; and even her reproof serves but to increase it.

My friend! my only friend! how powerfully persuasive is the voice of friendship, when it speaks the language of virtue, without assuming its severity! — It is over. Were I to die in the conflict, (and I am not far from wishing to do so) I voluntarily condemn myself to the most cruel and most painful sacrifice. My soul, brave as it is, trembles at the effort which it has imposed upon itself. No matter, I will be a man, and learn to suffer. To save my Ismena's tears, let mine overflow.

overflow. I will act with honour, Neville;—you shall be satisfied with my conduct. I go this moment to the combat; though firmly resolute, I weep my future triumph.—Adieu!

LETTER XXI.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

EIGHT days, my dear Fanny, have passed since I have seen Clermont!—I am sunk in the lowest dejection; every thing distresses and afflicts me. I go abroad, in hopes of meeting him; I stay at home, in expectation

pectation of his coming. I write to him every moment, and burn my letters as soon as they are written. How has he embittered my days!—he makes me feel all the extremes of grief. I am far from thinking myself happy that I have no farther conflict to sustain; by quitting the combat, he has killed me!—I fear him, yet he flies me! and I grow weaker from his flight!—Oh, my friend, if he has deceived me, with respect to that tender friendship he professes for me—— but no, I cannot support the idea.

During this everlasting week, which I have passed without beholding him, I have gone into twenty houses, without meeting him or Lady Emilia Edgeworth.

worth. Perhaps he loves her, notwithstanding his declarations to the contrary; and, their happiness centered in each other, they have withdrawn from the crowd, to indulge in retirement their mutual passion.

Lord Clermont doubtless thought that he might give way a little to a transitory liking for me; but finding that I resented his perfidious declaration (of more importance than he meant it), he has resumed his former chains, and I am now, perhaps, the object of his contempt. Cruel man! what have I done to offend him, except opposing the real scruples of a virtuous mind, without the smallest taint

taint of coquetry or art, to his pretended ardour?

He does not know how wretched he has made me. My heart is shut for ever against every image but his own. My youth shall all be wasted in the languor of that ill-requited tenderness which has concentered all my ideas, absorbed all my wishes, and which shall warm my latest sigh. It is thus I love; thus we ought to love, when virtue claims a part even of our passions.

From you I have received these sentiments, my gentle Fanny! — Love must be either the torment or disgrace of every female heart. If its excess can plead in its excuse, I have no

cause

cause to blush. I renounce the world; friendship alone remains for me. I throw myself upon your bosom; I repose my tears, my weakness, all the secrets of a heart that is not understood, on that soft sanctuary. Farewell!—Write to me. Your letters are soothing, they are my only consolation:—but can they heal my sorrow? O never!—I should not love them half so much, if it were possible they could render me insensible to my misery.

LETTER XXII.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

LEARN what I have done, applaud my intentions, my efforts, and place the rest of my story to the account of fatality. I am doomed to be faithless, even while I weep over the virtuous

virtuous object of my sacrifice. I have already informed you of my having hazarded a confession of my love to Lady Warwick. I ought not to have risked it; but, encouraged by this first step, and perhaps from fancying that I perceived some favourable dispositions in her towards me, my assiduities became more ardent, more lively, and were accompanied with that sort of precipitation which is by no means flattering to the object that inspires it; who, if she be really virtuous, will shrink at the impetuosity of a tenderness which would seek its own gratification at the expence of delicacy, decorum, and virtue.

But how was I surprised!—Your

conjectures about her are true. The lovely Cecilia is not what people suppose her; her letters, her conversation, breathe the soul of virtue. I think her sensible; her head is giddy, but her heart a treasure. It is from thence she borrows that sweet eloquence, that unaffected innocence, that steals away our hearts, and makes her be adored. Judge of my astonishment, my shame, and my remorse. I blushed at my temerity; and the more I discovered the perfections of this inexplicable woman, the more I strove to detach myself from her. At last, after many painful struggles, I resolved neither to see or write to her any more. I laboured to forget her, and fancied I had the power of doing so. During this

this time, I redoubled my attentions to Ismena, who will shortly be a mother; she never was more calm, more patient, or ever expressed more affection for me. Alas! the bandage is still upon her eyes. She smiles with fondness on the perfidious wretch who deceives her; she smiles while he assassinates her.

I was a thousand times upon the point of confessing to her my guilt, but was as often restrained by the fear of driving her to desperation, and at such a moment too!—How cruel is it to draw tears from those eyes that are sparkling with joy!—to substitute a painful truth in the room of a sweet illusion, and to enlighten a mind

which derives its happiness from its ignorance. I had not power to do so.

Meantime the image of Lady Warwick haunted me. She appeared to me more interesting, more lovely, than ever. I read her charming letters, and, in the same moment, full of indignation against myself, I have gone to throw myself at my sweet, affectionate, Ismena's feet. I shed some of those tender tears that naturally flow for the loss of a passion which we once held dear. Those fond memorials which ought to have alarmed, appeared to her unsuspecting mind but the effusions of my happiness and love. When these emotions of a disordered mind had subsided, I thought my triumph

was

was secure; I strengthened myself in my resolutions: I conned over your advice, I consulted my own heart; every thing declared itself in favour of Ismena; and, after a week's residence at the cottage, I bade her adieu, lest the Duke should be alarmed at my remaining longer from him. But yesterday, my friend! that day, the decisive epocha of my misfortunes, I went to dine at General Stanley's. Lady Warwick was the first object that struck my eyes on entering the drawing-room. I did not expect to meet her, not knowing she was acquainted with Mrs. Stanley. I trembled at her presence, and was more confused than it is possible to imagine. She turned her eyes upon me; they neither ex-

pressed resentment or disdain, but a soft melancholy, which pierced my soul. The tenderness and languor they betrayed, was irresistible. At dinner, I affected to be cheerful, and strove to divert her, but in vain.

Her chair was announced early; I conducted her to it, and ventured to whisper some sort of excuse, in those half-formed sentences which proceed directly from the heart. She did not answer me a single word. I have dared to interpret her silence, and have just written her a letter, dictated by love, by grief, regret, and all the transports of unbounded passion. Such, alas! is that with which she has inspired me.

It

It is too violent, I hope, to be lasting. The tenderness which I feel for Ismena, is habitual to my soul. It will be still dearer too, by other tender ties, which will more strongly bind me to her, when this delirium shall be passed; at least I wish it may. How horrible is my situation!—All opposition now is vain. I must submit to my fate; may I be its only victim!

Adieu!—If you condemn my conduct, my frankness has yet a right to claim your friendship.

LETTER XXIII.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

WARMTH of expression is by no means a proof of sincerity. No, my Lord, I can no longer credit any thing you say. But wherefore should you take the trouble of justifying yourself?—You are not bound to make excuses,

excuses, or express regret to me.—Your conduct appears extremely natural; you promised to behave with greater temperance towards me, and you have kept your word. I rejoice at it. Perhaps, too, you have acted in obedience to Lady Emilia Edgeworth; and I can have no right to disapprove any part of your conduct, but your seeming return of friendship to me.

Deceive her not—never again deceive her:—deceit is odious. I will not receive the honour of your Lordship's visits at my door, for I should be extremely sorry to be the cause of grief or anxiety to her. You are not quite so delicate; and if I had been weak enough to have been affected by

appearances, I don't fancy you would have given yourself more trouble to preserve them for my sake than you have done for hers.

Learn, my Lord, in future, to be more sincere with other women. You should strive to know the heart you venture to attach; without this precaution, you run the hazard of being worse than indiscreet—you risk the being a barbarian.

LETTER XXIV.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

I DO not know why your letter of to-day should be more persuasive than that of yesterday, but that it is less extravagant, and therefore seems to be more sincere. I am weary of talking of this Lady Emilia. It is, then,

then, certain that she is not the object that keeps you at a distance from your friends; you swear it, and entreat me to believe you. Granting this true, what service can this do you?—You entreat, you implore me, with the utmost earnestness, to see you. Well, my Lord, I shall be at home at four o'clock. You will have time to make your visits before then, for I suppose that you are much engaged.

LETTER XXV.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

MY letters, you say, seldom exceed four lines; be satisfied, this shall tire you. I did not answer your's this morning, I had a thousand things to vex and embarrass me, and could not find leisure to write so as to please myself. Perhaps that would take

take more time than you are aware of.

You complain of my severity and my prudence; I acknowledge and rejoice in them both, and I wish you could conquer the habit you have acquired of being so mor ally offended at them. I shall never dispute whether they proceed from coldness, or are the fruits of reflection; perfectly satisfied with the effects, I shall not contend about the cause. I must, however, beg leave to do justice to my sex. Do not deny us the power of combating our affections, of triumphing over our inclinations, and of concealing even our sufferings!

The men, unjust as they are, and unacquainted

acquainted with sorrow—these cruel men, I say, who judge so ill, and deceive so well, who make laws for themselves, and to whom it is no reproach to love, are so accustomed to exaggerate their sentiments, that they cannot conceive an idea of our doing violence to ours. And yet there are women who shed tears that are not *seen* to flow; who hide the bitterest anguish under an appearance of the most perfect ease, who controul their passions in spite of those rebellious pangs that tear their hearts, which, with all their pains, they may not perhaps be able to subdue.

Yet, after all, you will venture to dispute our fortitude!—This provokes me.

me. But I am by no means interested in this subject; and you will deceive yourself extremely, if you should make the smallest application upon the occasion. What I have said, is merely the result of our yesterday's conversation, and of some vague ideas, with which your letter of this morning has inspired me.

For heaven's sake, my Lord, let us talk of something else; this text gives me the vapours. I know not why I have dwelt upon it, for, in truth, I dislike it as much as I do your friend, the General, with whom we supped last night. He is, I think, a bad mimic of the Marquis of Belville; he pronounces with a decisive and supercili-

ous

ous air, speaks well of himself, and slightingly of every one else.

You think, perhaps, that creature has a soul—it is impossible!—How he talks of women!—I heard him expatiating to you on the pleasures of inconstancy, the delight of appearing innocent to her you would betray, of conveying the poison of perfidy into the bosom of love, and breaking the heart which is devoted to you.

These shocking pleasures may have charms for him; they seem well suited to his cruel nature. But how was it possible for you, my Lord, while, with an oracular decision, he delivered these precious maxims, while I yawned,

and

and that no other creature besides attended to his discourse; how was it possible, I ask again, that you could not only sometimes smile, but you never contradicted him? And your silence seemed to carry an air of approbation in it.

All men are alike warm in their love, but cold in their esteem; our value with them remains not after possession, and they think they have sufficiently paid our price with a little of that false coin called adoration, which they deprive us of with the same facility with which they bestowed it.

They allow us beauty, their compliment extends no further. They fall

at

at our feet; and why, or wherefore do they condescend to such humility?—Just as those infidels do, who have no faith in a Divinity, till they stand in need of its assistance; their adoration is momentary, their ingratitude perpetual, and their injustice is, at all times, but delayed. It is absolutely necessary to fly such enemies.—Adieu, my Lord.

P. S. I am frightened at the enormous length of this letter, and at the severe things I have said in it. Do you know you have some friends who give me but a very middling idea of your sensibility?

LETTER XXVI.

The Marquis of Belville to Lord Clermont.

The Abbey.

MY stay at Brighton has been longer than I intended; and some business will detain me here till Thursday. My anxiety about you is great; I have taken care to ask every one I have

have seen from town, news of you: indeed I had expected, before this, the very newspapers would have announced your progress, or rather your triumph :—but what can be the meaning that there is not the least rumour of it?—Are all the people in town grown dumb?—I have received many letters, but they are silent respecting your name; is it possible that your adventure is not yet concluded?—What else could have prevented its having transpired?—I have given the alarm, and set every one on the watch; and luckily for you, I am arrived time enough near you, I hope, to save you from further indiscretions.

I tremble lest you should be drawn into

into a sentimental passion. I am afraid of it. Lady Warwick has found out your foible, and has imposed upon you. She may perhaps have had art enough to persuade you of her virtue; she is capable of making the attempt, and you as likely to be deceived into the opinion.

I really begin to fear that she may at last inspire you with a passion for her;—what a figure would you then make!—Once more, my dear Clermont, I tell you, make an end of this affair, or you will be ruined by your ridiculous and tedious delicacy. Must I speak plainer to you?—Lady Warwick has been every body's Cleopatra except your own. Till now, I have been

been circumspect and tender of her reputation; but I am interested in your danger, and disgusted by her artifice.

Think seriously of this matter:—your situation ought to be dearer to you than hers. I would sacrifice the honour of twenty such women to that of one worthy man. I am the more pressing on this subject, as you have been already too much exposed, and (do not be angry) are very near being the laughing-stock of a world that never spares those who have once been made its jest.

Your Spaniard, then, persists in my exclusion. I am sorry for it upon your account; but I comfort

myself for losing the pleasure of her acquaintance, by that of seeing you inconstant. Be brisk, my boy, for your own satisfaction, as well as mine. Give me the earliest notice of your success; it is essential that I should know it:—if I should be from home, order my people to dispatch an express with the glad-tidings. When the exposing a woman's weakness is in question, one cannot be too diligent.

LETTER XXVII.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

YOU know that my dearest mother is at Springfield: she wished me to have accompanied her; I resisted her entreaties: I pretended business that would detain me in town till late; at all events, I said, I must

fix my summer excursion according to the commands of Sir Charles Warwick, who, to say the truth, I believe troubles himself less about my future plans than almost any other of my acquaintance. The innocence of her heart prevented her suspecting the *real motives* of her unhappy daughter.—She, dear saint, is so far from thinking ill of any one, that she would tremble at entertaining even a suspicion.—Happy being! whose inward consciousness inclines her to suppose the whole world to be like herself.

A charming tie has bound me to this spot; but the more my heart is enchanted, the more my reason is alarmed by it. Behold me then left to myself,

myself, alone with love and weakness! —My husband flies me; I have not even the strict example before me of a respectable and tenderly beloved mother. I may say I feel deserted, without stay or support. On the day my mother left me, you witnessed my sorrow; I was (to you, Fanny, I will confess it) forcibly struck with the idea of the danger that threatens me; I wept in her arms, and could hardly withdraw myself from that hallowed sanctuary; I lamented at quitting it, and felt how much I had occasion for such an asylum.

Lord Clermont's visits every day become more frequent. The depression under which my spirits labour, pre-

vents my admitting much company; therefore I sometimes see him *tête-à-tête*. He appears to be sincere, and has inspired me with a dangerous confidence in him. O my Fanny! I must fly his converse; I must break through the enchantment that surrounds me!—How can I hope to conquer him I love, when I only feel the lassitude and weariness of withstanding the siege?

I have received many pressing entreaties to visit our old and respectable friend, Admiral Osborn, who, you know, has been almost dying for the last ten years. He is now at his charming place near Reading, and is almost always alone. I will go and keep

keep him company; I shall be delighted with the calm serenity of a country life; I can even think upon my friends with more pleasure, and I shall have less reason to fear him, most dangerous to my tranquillity. The dear old man, who, by-the-by, is my god-father, writes me word that he has no ladies with him, at present, but his sister. She is a good old-fashioned creature, never leaves him while at High-Clift, and, from a child, was ever partial to your Cecilia. I shall there be at full liberty to seek my own amusements. I intend to use a great deal of exercise; to write to you, and in the release of absence, solitude, and reflection, I may, perhaps, find arms against my feelings.

My mother will be pleased at my intended visit. I would have gone to Springfield, but I feel under more restraint before that beloved, that respectable parent, which, in the present situation of my mind, I would wish to avoid, conscious that she would blame my susceptibility; and this is a lesson I have yet to learn.

I think of setting out the day after to-morrow. I fear to let Lord Clermont know my intentions: I will manage so that he shall not suspect them. He would fall at my feet, I should hear his sighs, I should see his tears, and remain where I am.

LETTER XXVIII.

Lord Clermont to Lady Warwick.

CAN it be true?—I saw you yesterday: you determined to quit London, and never mentioned a syllable of your resolutions to me!—I wake as from a dream. How have I offended you?—and wherefore do you

fly me?—You say you have occasion for air, exercise, and quiet; and you do not even seem to think upon the agitation under which you leave me. Forgive me, Lady Warwick: ought I to question your conduct? Have I a right to complain? or what have I to reproach you with, except your indifference?

But on my part, what have you to upbraid me with?—You accuse me of murmuring, of impatience, and of not being master of myself: but how is it possible to preserve one's temper with you?—Nothing can persuade, nothing can fix you; you are always on the wing, and, though gentle, you are obstinate. You seem inclined to act like

like other people, yet never do any thing but what your own caprice determines you to. But what does all this signify, while I live but to adore you!—Such is my destiny, such your ascendant, such my misfortune. I idolize even your failings, and I should plead in their excuse, if you were inclined to part with them.

I cannot get over your making a mystery of your intended tour. This then was the cause of that constraint which reigned in your conversation yesterday. How I detest that embarrassment which seems to confine your thoughts when we are together, that stops your timid lips, those soft confessions, which your heart per-

haps would not condemn! How I hate those secret struggles of a heart that seems to bestow and withhold itself in the same moment!—Credit your friend: prejudices are our greatest enemies, our tyrants; they embitter our happiness, and destroy our pleasures. I defy them, I abhor and trample them under my feet. I abandon myself to that delirium which is warm and blind as love, and which, with an impassioned hand, repels the antiquated and sour aspect of stern philosophy. O thou, to whom every faculty of my soul is devoted! thou, whom I should not love, yet doat on to distraction! O, deign to become sensible at least of that passion, which thou opposest with such rigour and disdain!—Say, can

you

you doubt my love?—Be certain, very certain, that, in adoring you, I but obey an irresistible attraction. I suffer every thing—I exact nothing.

When will you return?—Heavens! in what a situation have you abandoned me!—Your absence perhaps —— in pity do not prolong it; and in order to grant my request, forget that it was I who made it.—Adieu, most cruel, most beloved Cecilia.

LETTER XXIX.

Lady Warwick to Mrs. Fitzroy.

High Clift.

WHAT signifies all that I have done?—or what avails a few days absence, against a dangerous impression, which I have vainly combated? It is impossible to fly from the object of

of our regard; passion bestows ubiquity, and we meet him every where; and that image which our fancy supplies and adorns, is to the full as dangerous as the real object.

From you, my Fanny, I will not hide my sentiments, criminal as I feel they are. Pity my weakness, when I tell you I read over his letters, and recollect every word he ever spoke to me. Trembling I pronounce his name, but so low that none can hear me; I could not express the sound without such a degree of emotion as must be visible to all who heard or saw me.

This place is enchanting!—How blooming,

blooming, fresh, and animated, nature here appears!—Yet, spite of all the pleasures that surround me, my heart flies back to London; it is sensible of an anxious void, yet cannot tell what it desires.

I am very happy the retirement the Admiral lives in, has prevented Lord Clermont's knowing him; for this enchanting spot, embellished by his presence, would become formidable indeed. Alas! I shudder at what passes in my heart; my affection tyrannizes over me, and has subdued every faculty of my soul. I seek repose in vain; solitude but nourishes my agitation, and sleep increases it. I feel,

Fanny,

Fanny, a languor, a weariness of every thing, and an inquietude of mind that alarms and terrifies me. What mean these secret impulses, which prompt us towards a happiness we dread, and purchase so dearly before-hand, by the tears which precede it?—Let me hide myself in your bosom, and blush for the confession I have made: friendship will plead my excuse; I shall find favour before that tribunal!

How charming are the letters of this beloved friend, and how much am I embarrassed when I sit down to answer them!—I begin, perhaps, ten times, and am always dissatisfied with what I have written. The fear of betraying

traying my tenderness, that of afflicting him—every thing distracts me; even the excess of his regard. I feel myself a wretch, whenever I think him unhappy.

LETTER XXX.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

I DID not enter into the motive of my quitting town for a short time with your Lordship, as I did not think it necessary to acquaint you with my design in doing so. I now repeat what I have already told you, that

that I have, for some time past, felt the most impatient wish for retirement and repose:—every one knows what is necessary to their own health and happiness. Your letters, my Lord, help to amuse me agreeably here, except where you mention a passion, which it would be criminal in me to approve: I read them with pleasure, a pleasure not mixed with fear or apprehension.

In my present situation, every thing pleases and nothing alarms me; I enjoy the most perfect liberty. The worthy old Admiral was extremely glad to see me; he has at present no company but some of the neighbouring gentlemen, and an unmarried sister, who,

who, notwithstanding an asthma, which has rendered her the most peevish mortal upon earth, spends the little remainder of her breath in contradicting me the whole day long: she judges of me, like the world in general, that I am gay, dissipated, and thoughtless; and is for ever sounding the praises of her female contemporaries, though it is not so much their eulogium that is intended, as a satire against the women of these days. But I am mild and gentle, perhaps too much so at present, and generally let her say what she pleases. In the evening, we play at *Caseno*:—she has the most extraordinary good luck at it. I, you know, play wretchedly, and never win. This circumstance softens her

severity

severity towards me a little, and she thinks me delightful—*at cards*, I mean.

High Clift is the loveliest spot in the world; were I to attempt a description of it, you would, my Lord, take it for Fairy-land. In some places, nature is adorned by the hand of taste, and embellished with the riches of art; in others, she seems to be totally left to herself.

The water, as in most of our improvements, is not confined in a narrow bason, but flows, in its natural state, through the grounds; in the centre of a wood, which seems to have been formed by enchantment, is a cascade,

cascade, which the Admiral has lately formed, from a stream which, till then, flowed unnoticed in that enchanting spot. You know I sometimes indulge myself in scribbling a little bad poetry: I wrote a few lines on this favourite spot the other morning, which I will inclose, for you to laugh at my folly, in attempting that charming art in which so few excel.

ON A WATER-FALL.

Like bashful merit, long remote I stood,
Without a guard, unfriended, unimprov'd;
Lo! Osborn comes, with genius by his side,
Marks out my channel, and directs my tide;
Onwards I rush, and reach the rocky goal,
And, at his word, adown the summit roll;
To Paradise I fall, and there behold
All that of Eden has been sung or told;
Heaven on its Lord such pure delight bestows,
As, like my torrent, unremitting flows.

The

The Admiral is partial to his *little god-daughter*, as he still calls me, and is delighted with them; I know your partiality also to your friend, or I should not venture to expose myself to your criticism. The winding walks in this favourite wood, are formed into a labyrinth: All the gay flowers of the spring bloom there, and all the gay songsters of the woods seem to have chosen it for their aviary. The labyrinth terminates at an enchanting grotto: in that charming spot, one seems to be secluded from the whole universe. I retire thither often, particularly when the sun declines, and the mild breeze of evening sighs around; its charms attract me, its solitude detains me. It is formed for contemplation, and one reflects, without the

fear

fear of interruption, on what one will.

Talking of reveries, which are our waking dreams, recalls a sleeping one I had this morning, which I attribute to the romantic ideas with which the scenes by which I am surrounded, inspire me.—I imagined myself in a gloomy arbour, where I thought and reflected upon many visionary subjects, till I was led to wish for the conversation of a Sylph—a real one. Upon the instant, a spirit of that order appeared to me; he descended from a golden cloud, and was clothed in a vestment of bright azure blue; his figure——but I shall not forget, though I cannot describe it. His

looks were full of tenderness, unmixed with ardour or impatience; the sound of his voice, though soft and sweet, penetrated to my heart; he asked for nothing, he only desired permission to be my friend.

He was beginning to instruct me in the manners of the Sylphs, and the purity of their affections;—I even think that he spoke ill of men; I listened to him attentively, and was pleased with hearing him;—when my woman came to awaken me.—Adieu to my Sylph! I do regret him truely.

You ask me, when I shall return to town?—I cannot answer you, for I do not yet know myself:—I wait till you grow reasonable.

LETTER XXXI.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

THE most singular and daring idea has taken possession of my mind, and I will execute it. I can no longer exist without seeing Lady Warwick: I know the imprudence of my scheme,

but the excess of my anxiety justifies it. It is impossible that Cecilia should really be what she appears to me; in that case she would be too adorable: but I will no longer bear the being preyed on by the doubts and apprehensions of my heart; would rather even displease her. I am resolved to risk every thing. You know my heart; it is weak, yet ardent; its inclinations are impatient of controul, its affections violent; they must be satisfied, though I should hereafter be condemned to repent my indulging them, to weep over my errors, and submit the rest of my life to the remonstrances of my friend. My curricle waits:—I go.—Adieu!

LETTER XXXII.

Lord Clermont to Sir Frederick Neville.

NEVER, I charge you, speak ill of her to me again: the enthusiasm of my fondness has survived a degree of happiness, as I could scarcely form an idea of.—Where am I? How

shall I paint the agitations of my mind, or express its transports?—You must partake of the ecstasy, the intoxication, the enchantment of your friend.

My quitting town so abruptly, was my determination of visiting the abode of Admiral Osborn, which is near forty miles from London, and where my Cecilia is at present. She wrote me word, the day before, that she had had a dream, wherein she fancied she saw one of those fantastic beings, which owe their ideal existence to the delicate imagination of the fair-sex. To this dream I owe my happiness.—O, my dear Neville! she is more than mortal. Where shall I begin, how methodize my transports!—What recollections!

collections!—they steal away my reason, they hurry me out of myself.

I arrived at Reading about six in the evening; the day had been ragingly hot, but the evening was delightful. I left my curricle and servants at the inn, that nothing might betray me. High Clift is about two miles from thence. On my reaching a lodge belonging to the Admiral's porter, I enquired for the head-gardener, and was directed to him. I enquired of him, if it were possible to see the grounds?—He said, Not at that hour; he had his master's orders not to admit strangers. His fidelity remained unshaken by my entreaties, but a purse of ten guineas got the better of his

scruples, and removed all obstacles; it procured for me the master-key of all the gates and buildings in the park and gardens; and then, wisely judging I might choose to explore their beauties alone, he left me to myself.

I desired him to direct me to the spot she had mentioned as her favourite walk. Judge of the extravagance of my joy; I thought myself transported beneath another sky, and was no more myself; my eyes ceased to distinguish objects, they sought only my adored Cecilia. As I advanced in this Dedalean maze, I felt myself impressed with an involuntary tremor: at length, after many turns and windings, I heard a little sound. I scarcely breathed.

breathed. — What a sight! what a moment!—Seated on a bank of moss and wild flowers, I perceived her reading a letter; and was near enough to perceive it was one of mine. I was in ecstasy, and, enraptured with what I saw, I feared to lose the happiness I then possessed, by aiming at more. At length I grew bolder, and appeared before my divinity. She uttered a loud scream on seeing me, and dropped the letter from her trembling hand.

"Fear nothing," said I, throwing myself at her feet; "I am the Sylph whom you dreamed of — a friend—I will add, a lover; the most submissive, the most respectful, and the most tender, of his sex. I adore

you, and am come but to tell you so, and to repeat it a thousand times."—"Heavens!" said she, with a voice almost extinct, "is it an illusion?—do I wake?—or is it a continuation of my dream?"—"Yes, yes," said I; "you will know me for your Sylph by this description:—my wishes are silent, they are restrained by my respect."

At these words she grew pale and almost motionless; her looks were expressive of terror, but not of aversion. Suffice it to say, every thing favoured my wishes. I could see nothing but the object of my wishes, I could hear nothing but the voice of love: the seclusion of the situation—all combined to ensure my triumph. I dared

—perhaps

—perhaps her heart forgave me—every thing. The Sylph became a man—and the man became immortal.

We must part too soon, notwithstanding the entreaties of an happy lover, who condemned himself even for his success. Notwithstanding the instant of repentance, which, in the very crisis of my supremest felicity, her despair and grief had forced me to confess, the lovely Cecilia wrested herself from my arms, silent, distracted, and bathed in tears. To shew the power she has over me, her will, even at that moment, controuled my ardour. I gazed after her, through the obscurity of the night; and though not able

to distinguish objects, I thought I could still discern her angel form.

I need not say I enjoin you to secrecy; I confide myself to you, and you alone in the universe. Oh! my happiness is too lively, too deeply felt, to need the cold and inanimate pleasure of boasting!

LETTER XXXIII.

Lord Clermont to Lady Warwick.

IT is not a mortal that now writes to you: you have created a new soul; you have inspired me with your own. I bound over the space that separates us; I hear, see, and converse with you; I fold you in my arms,

arms, I lean upon your bosom; my senses are all agitated, my recollections all confused, my heart alone enjoys true happiness; an happiness that survives its transports, that conceals its desires, and furnishes motives for my pardon, dictated by the most refined delicacy.

But why should I plead guilty?—had I been culpable, I could not be so happy. O ye till now unknown delights! union of every pleasure, of every sentiment; resistance formed by honour, vanquished by love; ye tears of modesty, wiped away by passion; ye ecstasies, which ope elysium to my view, retrace yourselves on my enraptured mind; occupy my soul entire;

leave

leave me no other thought by day, and, for the vision of the night, present to my imagination the enchanting form of her I love, just such as it is engraved upon my heart!

O thou, whom nothing can eclipse, or equal; thou, whom the unfeeling world judges so severely, and yet knows so little; deign to accept the tenderest sentiments of a heart sincerely penetrated by gratitude and love!

Of what a world of perfections, what inestimable treasures, have I found myself possessed!—What beauty! what modesty!—O, cast away thy fears: it is sentiment, not passion,

sion, that has triumphed, that accounts with itself alone, and enjoys its transports in silence. It is a spirit refined, refined above the grossness of desire, which knows all the value of modest reserve, and reconciles chastity to itself, even in the very moment of its forfeit.

How, my Cecilia, art thou now employed? — Does a soft slumber seal those lovely eyes in which my fate is written?—Does some favourable dream represent me kneeling at thy feet, at once both ardent and submissive?— When I left you—say rather, when I tore myself from you—when you commanded me to fly, your hand did not press mine; you trembled, and quitted the

the scene of my felicity, more like a timid victim than an adored mistress. What sighs escaped you !—I felt your glowing tears ! — Weep not, most adored of thy sex; thy pearly tears would chill thy Clermont's heart.— Regain your tranquillity, deliver yourself over to all the soft delights of love, and rest your security on my faith. I wake to think on thee, and will not trust to dreams to bring thy image to view. I dispatch a messenger with this letter; early to-morrow you will receive it. Not being permitted to pass the solitary hours of night near you, and charm away their gloomy stillness, I will, at least, lay hold on your first waking moments, to repeat my vows of everlasting gratitude and love.

LETTER XXXIV.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

UNHAPPY, wretched as I am! where shall I fly, or how escape from the reproaches of my own heart? They are insupportable. What right had you to follow me to the solitude where I had sheltered myself?—My flying

flying your presence was a sufficient explanation of my sentiments; it was enough to inform you how firmly I was attached to those respectable duties which thou hast since violated. How forcibly do they now strike on my imagination, and dwell upon my mind! I cannot think, without horror, on the husband I have dishonoured. I have forgot his injuries; I remember only mine. I have broken all the ties that bound me to society, and am become an alien to every tender and sacred connection. I can no longer consider myself as a daughter, a mother, or a wife; and it is you, Clermont, alas! who have reduced me to this deplorable situation.

What

What right had you to destroy my peace?—I never did declare a passion for you: but if I had, the confession would only have rendered me culpable, and been also an aggravation of your crime. Before my lips had uttered to you any sentiment more tender than friendship, you seized on the most fatal proof of fondness. Why did my guardian angel quit his charge, and give me up to anguish, to remorse, to shame, and thee?—Alas! all nature seemed to conspire my ruin. I abhor you, my Lord;—I hate myself;—I tremble while I pronounce your hated name. Fly from me, fly for ever from me!

What have I said?—O, heavens! I tremble

I tremble at my own expressions: I no longer know myself. My sighs, my flowing tears, betray my heart; one crime draws on another. Yes, I loved you!—and, from a bosom torn with the bitterest remorse, and agitated almost to frenzy, my heart, which need not now be silent, as it has nought to hide, proclaims aloud I loved——even when I should have the most detested you.

My woman enters:—she brings me a letter—it is from you. I shudder! What powerful spell do these dear lines contain?—is it possible that it can triumph over my penitence, and disarm my resentment.—What is become of them?—A mist, which I fear

to

to disperse, seems to conceal your crime. I have no longer the courage to reproach you: I learn, then, the excess of my affection. It is from its excess alone, that I can ever hope to recover my own esteem, yours, or that of the whole universe.

Will you love me ever, can you still esteem me?—Nothing can satisfy my doubts, my fears, or soothe my mind to confidence; nothing can equal the anguish, the confusion, of my present situation. I dare no more behold you; I fear to look upon you, and yet I cannot live unless I see you. Though I no longer think you worthy, I cannot cease still to adore you. Is it you, who have abused my tenderness, falsified

sified your vows, become deaf to my entreaties?—Can it, indeed, be you? Forgive me!—a thousand times I beg your forgiveness!—I ought only to accuse myself; I only am to blame; I relied on my own strength, but to prove my weakness.

What miseries do I foresee!—how dreadful the abyss in which I am plunged!—You have left me, I am alone; a thousand reflections rush upon my mind; the silence of the night renders them still more gloomy. The peace of innocence, which I have lost, and which I envy to every creature round me—the calm repose which they enjoy, while love and penitence still keep me waking, all these conspire

spire to make me feel what I could only apprehend while you were near me. While I could hide myself within your arms, I could not be unhappy. I am only yours, for ever yours, and yet I weep!—I have sacrificed every thing, my honour, principles, and fame!—all that once was, and ought to have been for ever, sacred to me. They have, alas, been all surrendered! even to the right I had to your esteem. You, Clermont, have robbed me of them all. And yet, guilty as I am, I am still more sensible of your happiness than of my own wrongs, my fears, my loss.

Inhuman as you are! you wished me to infringe the laws of duty; you desired

desired what was forbidden me to grant, and what I vainly flattered myself I should have been for ever able to deny. Contented with seeing and loving you, with passing every moment of my life in wishing for your happiness, in expecting you, in being solely devoted to you; the honest pride of having nothing to reproach myself, softened the pain of my refusal. I could then lift up my eyes to look on you, and turn them inward on myself, without a blush; the possession of your heart satisfied every wish of mine, and the purity of my sentiments sufficiently excused their tenderness.

But now—heavens! now that I am guilty! I suffer, and I have deserved to do so. Thou, who hast cost me so many floods of tears, and yet makest them dear to me, because they flow for thee; thou, who art at present lord of my reputation, my life, my fate; thou, to whom I solely and entirely belong; should all these sacrifices, one day, lose their value in thine eyes, know that thou never canst deprive me of the supreme delight of having rendered thee happy.

Do not distrust the apparent lightness of my manners. My very weakness is security sufficient for my constancy. You may render me truely unhappy,

unhappy, but nothing, nothing in this world can now detach me from you; not even your ingratitude.

It is now eight in the morning: I have not been in bed, nor closed my eyes; I am faint and weary. You are far from me; your letter soothes and consoles,—but do your transports arise from love indeed?

LETTER XXXV.

Lord Clermont to Lady Warwick.

WHAT a charming letter!—it prolongs my rapture and increases delirium.—And yet you weep! and is it I who cause those precious drops to flow?—I cast myself at your feet, and thence implore my pardon, without ceasing

ing to adore my crime. I was no longer master of my transports; distracted, wild with passion, I neither saw nor heard. Had thunder rolled, and lightning flashed around, they would then have passed unmarked by me, without interrupting my transports; they would but have shone upon my happiness. Let not your tender sorrow, my beloved, destroy it. Your misery renders me wretched.

What! you become an alien to society!—you, who are its brightest ornament, and must for ever be its greatest charm?—Say, cruel, adored Cecilia, what are those ties which you have broken?—Can it be those which bound you to an husband whose conduct

must long since have effaced every tender and delicate sentiment towards him? If you are become an individual detached from all society, was it not he who first dissolved that connection? Were you obliged to sacrifice your heart to him who had alienated his own?

Have women, then, no other virtue but the melancholy one of preserving their affections for perfidious husbands? and did that Power who formed them, ordain that, in their blooming years, they should become volunteers in misery?—that they should go to the altar, there to seal their bondage, and devote their future lives to undeserved affliction? This barbarous prejudice provokes

provokes my indignation; your sense and reason ought to be superior to so unequal and absurd an opinion. It suits not with such souls as yours, thou most angelic but unjust woman!

Then dry thy tears, banish regret, and yield, without apprehension, to the impression of a feeling heart; those that are most lively, those that are most tender, ought to be ever held the most sacred. Fear not, most beloved of thy sex, the having forfeited my esteem. Alas! why can I not lay open to your sight that heart where thou art alone sovereign?—Why cannot you discover your own triumph there, and view the throne of your despotic sway?

I will

I will be sincere. I did not judge you rightly. I confess shame at my past error. It has rendered even me miserable; more so than I can express to you. Your last letter, like a ray of divine light, has shewn you truely to me. My happiness renders you still more lovely, and ensures you that esteem which you fear to have lost, in its most perfect purity. A yielding such as yours, cannot lessen your merits; a heart so bestowed, ought to be proud of having made the gift. I but loved you before my triumph; I adore you since. How blind, how cruel, is the world!—but you are avenged: cease to think yourself guilty; it is I who have been your ruin, but

will

will no more be so. My contrition is extreme.

You remain where you are!—your inclinations do not draw you towards me! What prevents your return to Grosvenor-Square? Solitude nourishes your sorrow; return, I conjure you. Fear not to meet my eyes; they will express nothing but submissive love. I am more agitated even than yourself. My heart is oppressed; it waits relief from thine. I do but breathe, while thou art absent.

LETTER XXXVI.

Lady Warwick to Lord Clermont.

IS it then true that you are prejudiced against me?—Oh, then perhaps you loved me not!—I cannot bear the thought, wretch that I am! Have I bestowed my heart on one who had reserved his own?—No, it is impossible

possible sympathy alone could have conquered me. I must do you justice: had you been impressed with a slight sentiment only towards me, you would not have strove to inspire me with a real passion; you must be incapable of such a baseness.

Let the world, cruel and censorious as it is, say what it will; as it judges without knowing, it is unjust without offending me: but if you, whom I adore, should dare to think of me unworthily—if it were possible you could do so!—your opinion would be every thing to me: what others think, or say, alike indifferent to, I renounce, I despise it.

What

What are the opinions of the multitude, to an heart that is solely devoted to one object, and in which vanity has no place?—Say, where could it find room, when I am only yours, and to you have consecrated my future life?—Can I be anxious about any other sentiment of me but yours?

Attached to you alone, insensible to every one beside, and regardless of every thing else but you, even the very pleasure of pleasing is become extinct in me. That emulation which is called coquetry, exists not with true love, and therefore subsists not in me. It is you who have wrought this transformation; you only could have effected

fected it. The extravagance of my affection to you, at least should justify the errors it has led me into. How happy are you, not to feel remorse !—you are more so than I :—No, I deny it. You must be less so, for I have made a sacrifice, and you have not.

You wish for my return ?—I dread it. I know not, however, but this retreat, lately so pleasing to me, has changed its aspect. Every object reminds me of my weakness. I wish to go to the wood, that fatal sepulchre of my innocence ; as I approached it, I felt a secret horror : its shade, under which I used to breathe the sighs of concealed tenderness, has, since my fall, become a dismal gloom, a withered

Eden, to me; and as I entered it, methought I heard a voice, reproaching me with my crime, and announcing all its fatal consequences. Alas! the monitor was not vocal; I but felt it from within.—Whence come these sad presages?—they terrify my heart. I seem a wretch detached from all society. I cannot reflect on my children without a blush of shame; and even inanimate nature appears in arms against me; the air has now no freshness, the brooks have lost their murmur; my days are joyless, and my nights are horrid. It is yours to dissipate the terrors that surround me; into your hands alone do I commit my fate.

I rave!—

I rave!—Did I say you?—who have ruined and dishonoured me!—you, who perhaps despised me when I adored you!—It is resolved!—I will not quit this voluntary exile. I will avoid you: never, alas! shall I be able to forget you. The efforts I should make to tear you from my heart would not succeed. I will not strive in vain. How is it possible I should wish to see you?—I should reproach you with my wrongs, and you would but add to them.

Rest satisfied. I respect your esteem too much to expose myself to the shame, the danger, the felicity, of ever more beholding you.

END OF VOL. II.

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