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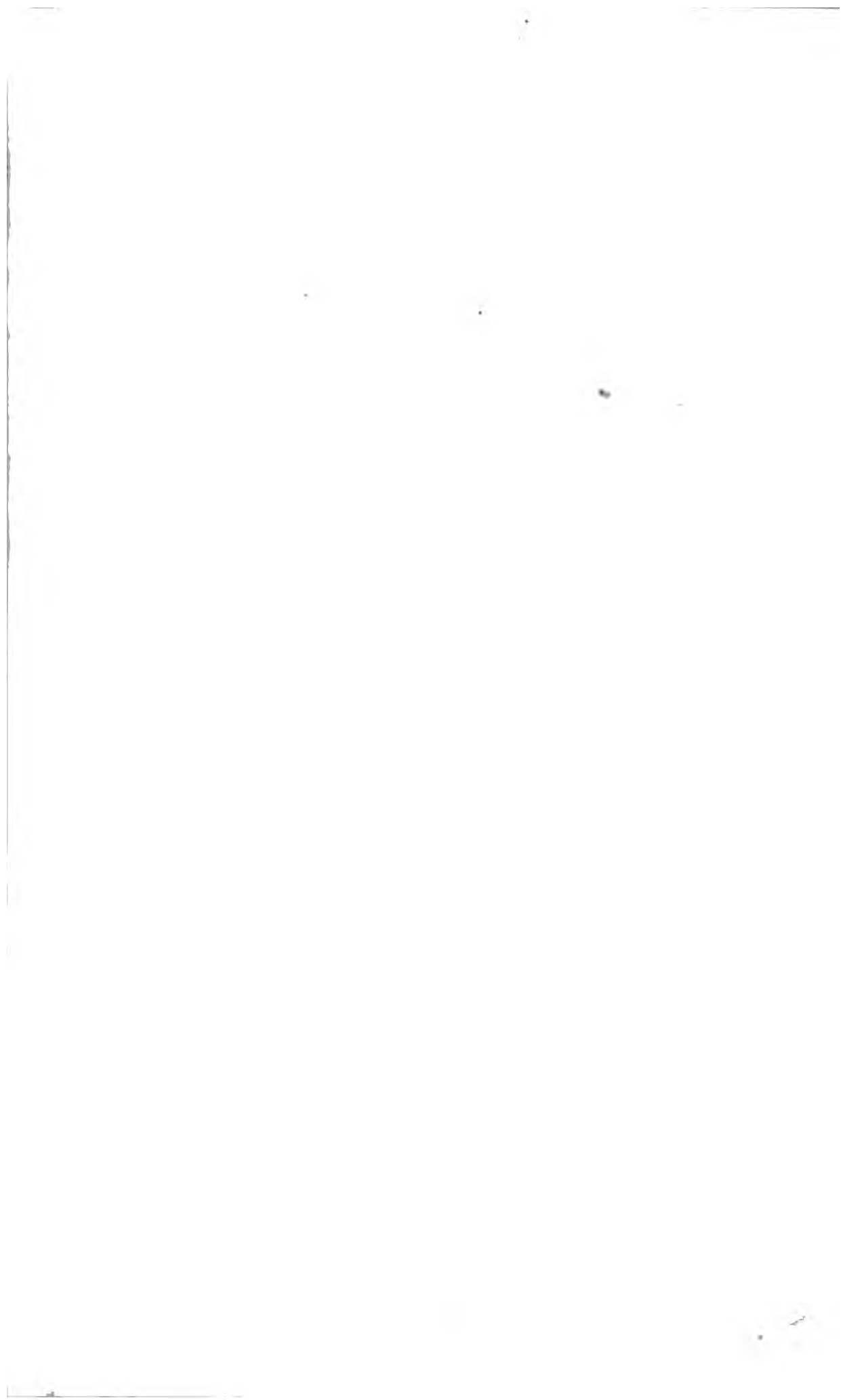
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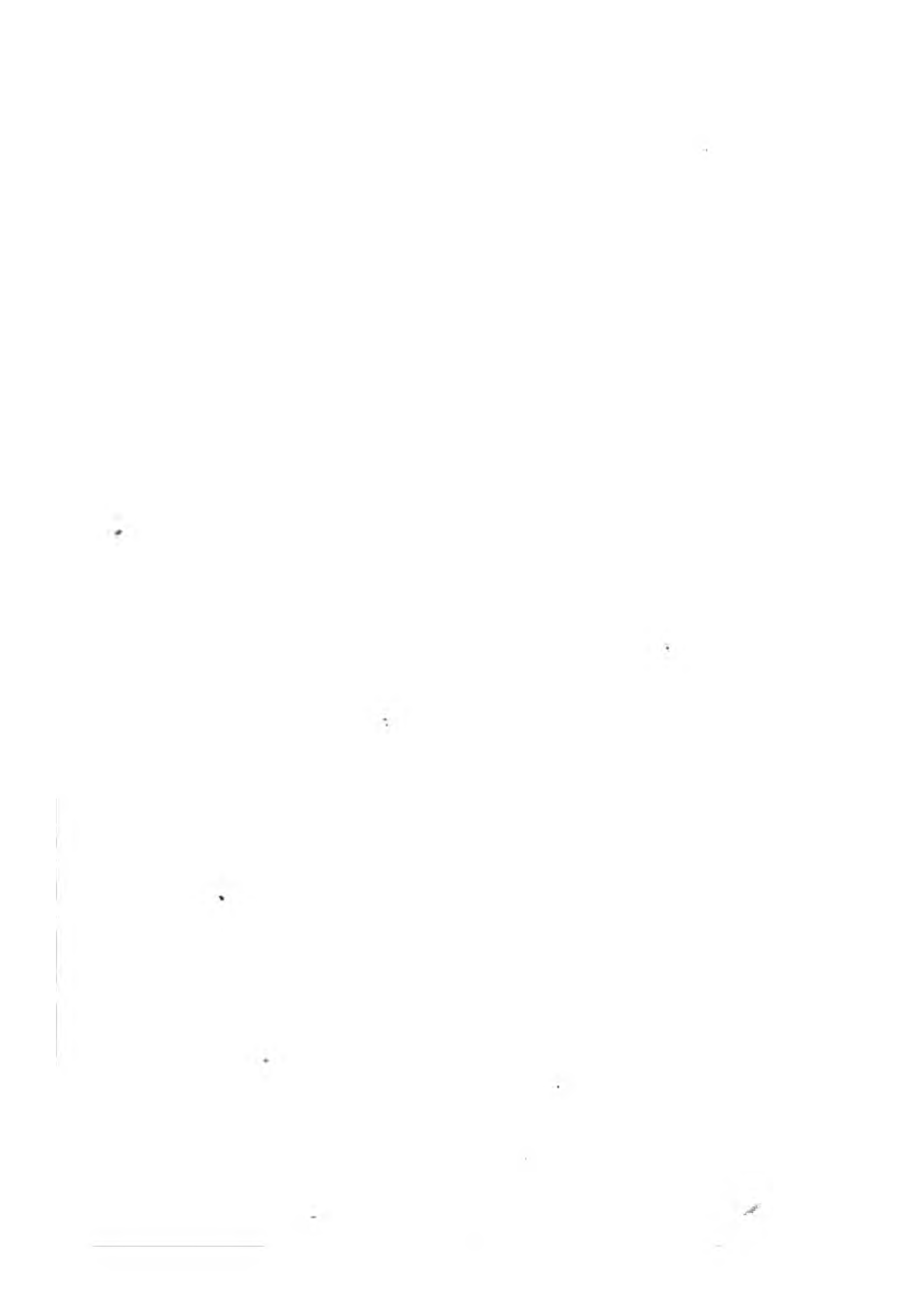
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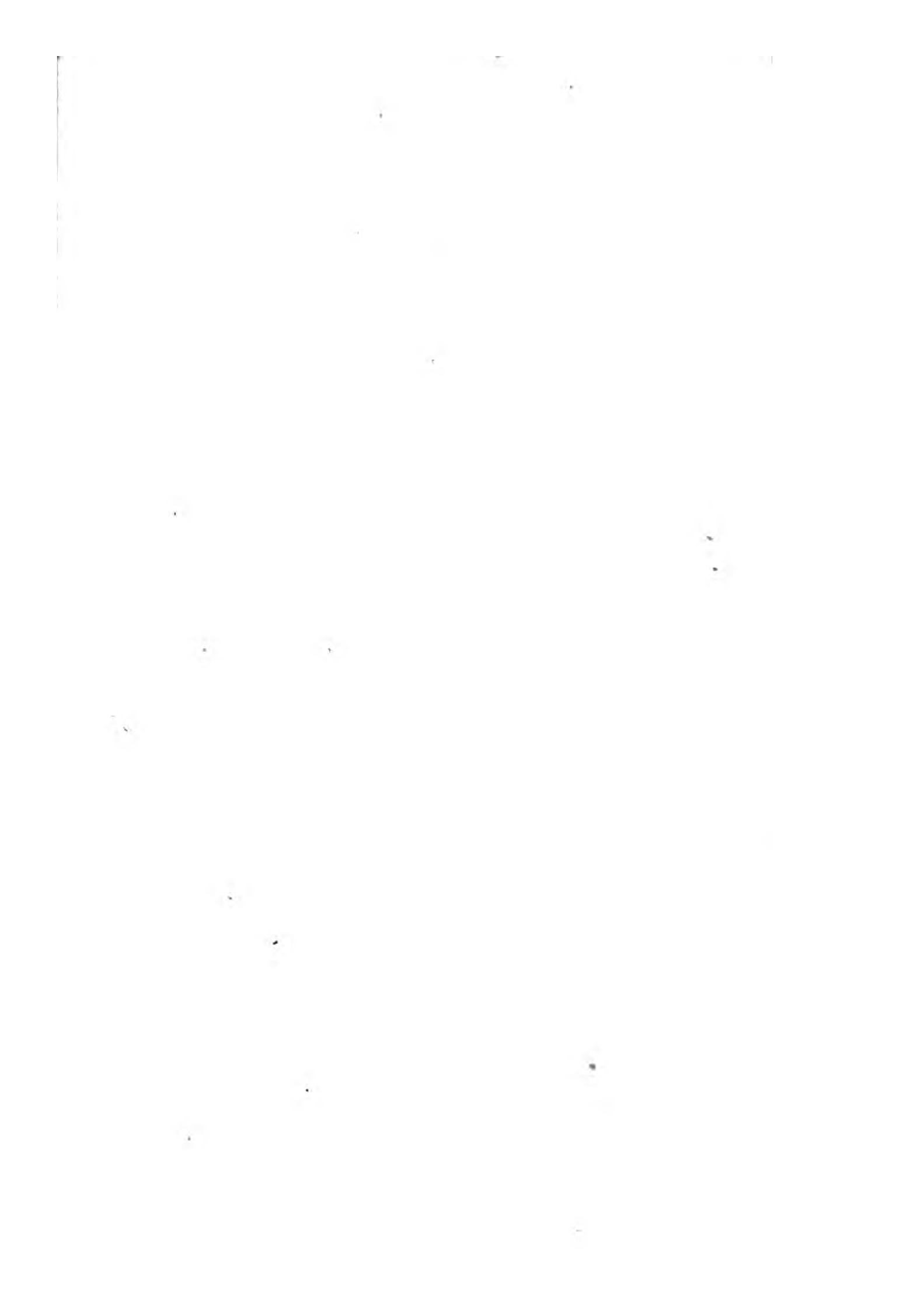
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THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

VOL. I.

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THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

BY
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

“ 'Tis you that say it, not I; you do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words.”

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY CONDUIT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

489.



PREFACE.

THE design of personal satire is sometimes justly, more often erroneously, attributed to those who attempt to paint the manners of the day; and, through the character of a fiction, to delineate the vices or the follies of real life. But as one who refuses the shelter of the anonymous is usually supposed to reject its privileges, so the Author of these volumes ventures to hope that, by pre-

fixing her name to her Work, she offers, at least, a guarantee of her desire neither to excite the fear, nor to wound the vanity, of individuals.

They who move in a highly artificial state of society, acquire, however, a kind of family resemblance; and every general description is susceptible of personal application: while, on the other hand, it is a common disposition among readers to reverse the destiny of Peter Schlemil, and hunt after a substance to every bodiless and visionary shadow:— For, whether it be from curiosity or affection, it is certainly true that we are apt to take up a novel as we go to an exhibition, less to criticise the creations

of fancy, than to search for the portraits of our friends.

It is not then a superfluous precaution seriously to declare, that the Characters of this Work are invented, not copied, as the representatives of a class, or the agents of a moral ; and the greater the number of persons (whether those who sully, or those who adorn society), that each sketch may be thought to resemble, the more, perhaps, the Author will have obtained the object of her Work, and proved the assertion of her Preface.

THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

LADY AUGUSTA VERNON TO LADY
MARY HOWARD.

Vernon Hall, June.

I AM sixteen to-day, dearest Mary, and feel so happy and joyous, that I must make you a partaker of my felicity. Would that you were here! for, *hélas!* it will be three long days ere this can reach you; and who knows if, at the expiration of that period, brief as it is, I shall be still as contented? And yet, why not? Have I not all that should insure happiness? A dear, kind, indulgent father,

who spoils, and a mild, sweet mother, who corrects me only with a sigh, or a look of more than usual solicitude. I am, as you have often told me, a strange wayward creature — giddy as a school-boy when he first escapes to his play-ground ; and yet, with gleams of melancholy presentiment, as if I felt that there is that within me which may preclude lasting peace.

The truth is, my father and mother are too partial to my good qualities (if, indeed, I possess any), and too blind, or too tolerating, to my faults. Should I ever meet with less lenient judges, how miserable I shall be, and how *unamiable* may I become ! for, I am too unused to censure to be capable of patiently enduring it. And yet, how can I hope to find the same absorbing affection, the same forbearing kindness, that I have experienced from my infancy ? But, no ; I will not allow any

forebodings of the future to cast a gloom over the delightful present. Am I not uncertain as an April morning? I began, all sunshine, with telling you of my happiness; and here am I, clouded over by doubts of its continuance. Thus, it is with me ever — smiles or tears; and both equally beyond my control.

Are you not dying with curiosity to learn the cause of the happiness announced in the second line of this letter? You, who are two years my senior, and ten years wiser, if wisdom may be rated by years, will smile, when I confess, that much of this elation was caused by my dear mother's presenting me with her beautiful *parure* of pearls; and my kind father's giving me a hundred pounds, in the prettiest new pocket-book that ever was seen. Yet, before you condemn me for being delighted by "barbaric pearls," or "sordid gold," let me tell you, that the

words which accompanied the gifts caused the happiness, more than the gifts themselves; though I am not insensible to their charms. "Augusta, my precious child!" said my mother, in that mild and earnest way, so peculiar to her; "here, is your birth-day present: may you ever continue as pure and spotless as the pearls which I now bestow on you."

I threw myself into her arms, and wept on her bosom, for my heart was too full to speak; and I felt, at the moment, that I would rather have died there, than have caused her to shed a tear. She led me to my father's study, who, embracing me, put the pretty pocket-book I told you of into my hand, saying, "Take this, my own Gusty, and when its contents are expended, bring it back to me, and they shall be replaced. You are my darling, my only child — my comfort!" Then, as I clasped his neck, and pressed his

dear face, I felt his tears moisten my cheek. With such parents, have I not cause to be contented? Yes, I am; and will be, dearest Mary, your *happy*, as well as affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LADY MARY HOWARD TO LADY
AUGUSTA VERNON.

Howard Castle, June.

DEAREST AUGUSTA,—Were I inclined to play the Mentor, I should lecture you on the proneness to give way to first impulses, which I have always remarked in you; and which is so evident all through your last letter. You say that “you have a melancholy presentiment of having that within you, which may preclude lasting happiness.” Does this not look like acknowledging, that you have

faults which may conquer you, instead of your conquering them; and who, with such a belief, could hope for happiness? Happiness is a rare plant, that seldom takes root on earth: few ever enjoyed it, except for a brief period; the search after it is rarely rewarded by the discovery. But, there is an admirable substitute for it, which all may hope to attain, as its attainment depends wholly on self — and that is, a contented spirit. This panacea for the ills of life can never belong to those who are governed *by*, instead of governing their feelings. Feelings are delightful acquaintances; and, like acquaintances, they are charming during prosperity; but, *principles* are our *true friends*, rescuing us from danger, and consoling us in affliction. Cultivate *principles*, then, dearest Augusta, and learn to make *feelings* as subservient to them — as good servants should be to their

masters, knowing that wisdom and justice guide them. A ship on the trackless main, without a rudder or compass, is not in a more fearful state than a young and lovely woman without fixed principles, abandoned to the sole government of her feelings.

And now, let me tell you, that this will, probably, be the last lecture you will receive from Mary *Howard*. But do not, therefore, think you are to escape future admonitions. No, dearest Augusta; Mary Delaward, in her matron character, will continue to give her giddy, but dearly loved friend, as many lectures (when required) as sober-minded Mary Howard ever has done.

All is finally fixed for my marriage: the probation, to which Lord Delaward at first submitted with so bad a grace, is expired; and I now may become a wife, with that indispensable, and *only* surety for domestic

peace, — a perfect reliance on the principles of a husband. That I preferred him to all others, you have known; and you know, also, that, when after his return from Italy he sought my hand, I had no means of judging of his tastes or pursuits, except by waiting a year, and seeing or hearing how he occupied his time. He has passed triumphantly through the dangerous ordeal of a season in London, and an autumn and winter in the society of his friends, at their residences, and at Delaward Park. He has neither frequented Crockford's, nor attended every meeting at Newmarket; nor hunted at Melton; nor formed intimacies with dissolute men; nor flirted with any of the women who are more remarkable for attracting admiration than for repelling admirers. In short, he is not a young man of fashion; or, rather, a fashionable man; and therefore, I am not

afraid that he will find clubs more agreeable than home, or any other man's wife more to his taste, than his own.

My father has written to yours, to request that he, and your good mother, will conduct your giddy self to Howard Castle, to be present at the nuptial ceremony. This will be a good occasion for you to display your pearls, on the possession of which I congratulate you : and to gratify, by your presence, your fondly attached

MARY HOWARD.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Howard Castle.

HERE we are, my dear Caroline, safely arrived ; and, according to promise, I give you an account of all that is going on in this place. Dear Mary Howard is as amiable, as hand-

some, and as *reasonable*, as ever ; and seems to me unaccountably tranquil, for one who is on the point of marrying the man of her choice. I should be all in a flutter on such an occasion, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, and doing both by turns. Lord Delaward is very good-looking, but has a sort of dignified gravity about him that is rather chilling and imposing ; at least, such is its effect on me. There is a respectful deference in his manner towards Mary, that checks even my habitual familiarity : it is as though he wished to intimate, that *she* whom *he* had chosen was not to be lightly approached ; consequently, I find myself involuntarily assuming a more reverential demeanour towards her—not that I am less attached to her than before. I wonder, Caroline, whether *I* shall ever excite this respectful feeling in the breast of any man. There is something very flatter-

ing in it, too ; yet, I should like to be more wildly, more passionately loved than Mary is ; and I should be addicted to *shewing* my power over my lover, as well as exerting it. How delightful to alarm, to agitate him—to make him feel as if he could never be sure of me ! instead of being, as Lord Delaward appears to be, as certain of Mary's unchangeable affection as he is of his own.

I write all that comes into my giddy head to you, because I know you to be as giddy as myself. I dared not have addressed half this idle trifling to Mary Howard, who views, in her future husband, the companion with whom she is to share those trials of life from which even the most fortunate are not exempt ; while I should think only of the lover, with whom I was to enjoy its pleasures. Mary's is the just view, mine the too common one.

Lord Delaward presented a superb suit of

diamonds to Mary this morning; they were in a case lined with blue velvet, and really shone like stars in the azure sky. They did not at all dazzle her, though, I confess, they did me. She seemed to value them only as being *his* gift, and in consequence of their having never been worn save by virtuous women; for his mother and grandmother were remarkable for their decorous lives; but *I*, if the truth must be told, should have valued them for their own intrinsic beauty, and not have given a thought to their former owners. I often wish that I could be as good and as rational as Mary Howard; and she sometimes makes me good, if not wise, by the influence she possesses over me. *Mais, hélas!* it does not last long; for a few flattering speeches, a new dress, or a trinket, excite me to fresh levities, and all my praiseworthy resolutions fade away. I must leave off, as I am summoned to the

drawing-room ; and shall resume my pen to-morrow, after the wedding.

I never fancied that I should weep at a wedding ; yet, I have done so ; and so, I think, would even you, had you been present, little as you are given to the indulgence of tears. There is something solemn in witnessing the ratification of a union that death alone can dissolve, when the individuals forming it are fully penetrated with the importance, the holiness of the duties they are undertaking. Mary (no longer Mary *Howard*) preferred being married in the parish church to having the ceremony performed at home : I ventured to ask her the reason yesterday, when we were alone ; and she told me, that, having been baptised, confirmed, and having received

the sacrament in that church, she wished to pledge her faith at the same altar.

“ My mother, too, sleeps there,” added Mary, with a tear trembling in her eye ; “ and this is a strong inducement to me : it is as though it sanctified still more solemnly my marriage.”

A pensiveness pervaded the whole party last evening. Lord Howard was evidently thinking of his approaching separation from his child, while she was continually stealing looks at him, as if to imprint his features in her memory ; though, at each glance, her eyes became suffused with tears. Lord Delaward made Lord Howard promise to join them in a fortnight ; and pressed it so strongly, that it was easy to see that he considered this the best mode of consoling Mary.

My dear good papa and mamma seemed

to think that it was *I* that was going to be married; for they looked at me as often and as tenderly as if I was to be whisked off from them to-morrow in a travelling-carriage and four; and I began to fear, that they would make up their minds to take measures for my leading a life of single blessedness, now that all the pain of parting with a child was "brought home to their business and their bosoms" by witnessing Lord Howard's chagrin.

The old servants (and nearly all of them are old) seemed to partake the general depression of spirits; and I continually caught them regarding their young mistress with reverential affection. I know that you will expect a description of the bride's dress, but I am thinking too much of *her*, to enter into a detail of her toilette. It was all that was proper for such an occasion; but, her pale

cheek, trembling lip, and tearful eyes, prevented even my giddy self from attending to aught else. The children of the school that Mary founded here, all attended at the church, headed by their mistress, and in their Sunday clothes, each carrying a bouquet. The clergyman who performed the ceremony is the same who baptised Mary; and he read the service most impressively. She repeated the words in a clear and firm voice, as if she wished all present to hear her; and when Lord Delaward placed the ring on her finger, she looked at the monument of her mother, as if to beseech the blessing of her whose remains are reposing beneath it. Tears were continually stealing down the cheeks of Lord Howard; his thoughts appeared to be divided between the wife he had lost, and the child he was then resigning.

When we left the church, the children presented their bouquets to Lady Delaward, and our carriages were nearly filled with flowers, as, followed by the blessings of the poor, who all assembled to see their benefactress, we returned to Howard Castle.

The *déjeûner*, though a very splendid one, was little honoured by the appetites of the guests. The father and daughter were too much affected to admit of any thing like cheerfulness in those around them. When the repast had terminated, and Lord Delaward's carriage was announced, Mary affectionately reminded my father and mother of their promise to remain at Howard Castle, until the day her father is to set out to join her at Delaward Park, where we are also invited.

The parting between Lord Howard and Mary was truly affecting, and the more so

that it was evident each had endeavoured, for the sake of the other, to suppress all manifestation of emotion. When the carriage of the bridegroom drove away, Lord Howard entered his study, followed by my father and mother, who shared his grief, if they could not remove it; and they are all three, at this moment, talking over the happy prospects of the new-married couple. The tenantry and the poor have been plentifully regaled in the park; so that, while within the castle *all* has been melancholy, the greatest hilarity prevails without.

I have now written you an epistle as large as the *Times* newspaper with a supplementary sheet, for which you ought to be very thankful, as I have not been in an epistolary mood. I must be present at the marriage of some madcap like yourself, to remove the impression produced on me by that which I have

just witnessed ; and to bring me back to the comfortable belief, which you have tried to inculcate, that it is only a ceremony established to give ladies the power of obtaining homes and wardrobes, diamonds, and new carriages, and various other delightful things, too numerous to name : and all this good only taxed with the appendage of a—husband. Your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA VERNON.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO THE LADY A. VERNON.

Do you know, *ma chère*, that you are growing quite romantic and sentimental. Your whole description of the marriage of your sober-minded friend was worthy of some lachrymose novel, and not at all like your usual *léger* style ; which I am candid enough to acknowledge that I prefer. Lord Dela-

ward seems to be a sort of modern copy of Sir Charles Grandison; and presents himself to my imagination in a court-dress, with a *chapeau-bras*. I am sure that he and his bride will be models of domestic felicity, doing all the good in their power, and avoiding all the evil; superintending their household, establishing charity-schools, setting the best examples, and, content to "live in decencies for ever," arrive at a good old age, the slaves to what they call their principles; but, which, in dear France, where my happiest days have been past, we designate by another and a better name — prejudices.

I almost begin to despair of making any thing of you, *chère Augusta*, while you are so easily influenced by those around you. You resemble the chameleon, which is said to take the colours of whatever it is brought in contact with. This must not be. Influence

others *tant que vous voudrez*; but, if you wish to maintain your independence, permit not others to influence you.

What could be more absurd than the maudlin sentimentality of Lord Howard at his daughter's marrying well — an object which, I dare say, it has been his constant aim to accomplish ever since she passed her third lustre? Then, Lady Mary finds it a very melancholy thing, forsooth, to marry the man of her choice, with a high station, large fortune, and all appliances to boot; because, it takes her from her dull old paternal castle, her stupid papa, and her — charity-school! Do not be very much offended with me, *ma chère petite*, when I confess that I laughed heartily at your sentimental description of all this absurd drivelling. You talk of the solemnity of the ratification of a union which *death* alone can dissolve, quite for-

getting how often the House of Lords performs this service ; as a reference to " Debrett's Peerage " can certify. Had you reflected on the possibility of this less *solemn* dissolution of Hymen's chains, a possibility which is always taken into consideration by the lawyers employed by the contracting parties, if not by the contracting parties themselves, you would have felt less melancholy on the occasion. Indeed, your lachrymose sympathies appeared to me quite incomprehensible ; and I expected to have Lady Mary's tears ultimately accounted for by the discovery of some interesting young swain in the neighbourhood, the son of the parson or doctor, who had ventured to regard her beauties, as dogs bay the moon. I could fill up a very pretty little vaudeville from such a subject ; whereas, of the reality, as you viewed it, one could make nothing. We live in an age, *ma bonne Augusta*, when

none but exciting subjects have any interest. Tears are now only shed when great crimes are their source ; domestic feelings are *passés de mode* ; and those who would awaken sympathy, must dare guilt. Look at the theatres in France — where horror on horror accumulates, and plaudits “ loud and deep ” follow every scene of guilt, and every sentiment of reckless daring ! Look at the crimes every day committed in that land of passion, where naught sleeps save—reason ; and where events, public and private, succeed each other so quickly, that the mind is kept in a continual and delightful state of excitement. Had your friend, Lady Mary, and her sapient *père*, been inhabitants of dear France, they would have found neither time nor scene for their domestic sentimentalities. She would have been thinking of her *trousseau*, and the envy it would excite—or the last novel of Eugene, Sue, or

Balzac, or of all these ; for in France a woman's head can embrace simultaneously many more subjects than ours can contain in succession, during the lapse of a twelvemonth. And hence their general freedom from concentrated or violent affections ; a freedom that renders them *toujours gai, et toujours aimable*,—they dispensing to the *many*, the smiles and *petits soins* that we reserve for the *few*. But to return to you, *ma chère*. Let me beseech you to abandon *l'école sentimentale, c'est mauvais genre à présent* : let me, also, remind you to be careful of not allowing my letters to be seen by any eye save your own. I write to you *à cœur ouvert* ; and should detest having my hasty and inartificial compositions subjected to the perusal and criticism of some one who might not be able to understand them, or
votre amie,

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
LADY AUGUSTA VERNON.*Delaward Park.*

I AM impatient to hear from you, dearest Augusta, how my beloved father supports this, our first separation. He has written to me in a cheerful tone; but he is so prone to conceal his own sufferings, in order not to increase those of others, that I fear his cheerfulness was only assumed to tranquillise me. I have been so accustomed to refer to him on all occasions, to administer to his happiness, and to derive mine from him, that, even surrounded with blessings as I am, I want his presence, to be as contented and as grateful as I ought to be. How thankful should we be to the Almighty, when He gives us parents whom we can love and reverence, as well as obey—when affection and duty go

hand in hand ! This has been my blessed lot, and is likewise yours, my dear Augusta. There is, however, one difference between our parents, though it proceeds from the same cause, acting diversely,—namely, excessive affection. Mine never permitted me to have a secret from them, or to receive a letter from any of my companions that was not submitted to their inspection. This plan was adopted when I was so young, that I could not understand its motive ; and, when I grew older, the habit was so formed, that I knew not whether it was continued by their desire or my own. They reasoned with me on the fallacies often contained in the letters of my young friends, and on the inferences which my inexperience led me to draw from them. They taught me to reflect, and to distinguish between what was erroneous and what was praiseworthy in sentiment ; and to judge of actions by principle

alone, and not by prejudices. From how many false impressions did my beloved parents rescue me, by exerting for me their reason, ere my own had acquired sufficient force to protect me! Yours, with equal affection, impose no restraint on your intercourse with your female friends. They never see your correspondence; consequently, cannot refute the false opinions it may contain, and, for the detection of which, your youth and inexperience unfit you. You are, therefore, exposed to the danger of imbibing the sentiments of those who are less amiable and pure-minded than yourself; ere yet your principles are immutably fixed, or your reasoning powers sufficiently matured to enable you to reject the poison that may be thus proffered. You know, dear Augusta, that I am not malignant or censorious; and, therefore, will not suspect me of being influenced by unworthy feelings,

when I tell you I am apprehensive that the purity of your mind may be sullied, and the goodness of your heart impaired, by your correspondence with Miss Montessor. When you mentioned, in the presence of Lord Delaward, that you frequently heard from her, did you not observe that he looked unusually grave? Knowing the sincerity of my affection for you, he has thought it his duty to inform me, that, from all he saw and heard of that young lady, in Italy, and in France, he considers an intimacy with her fraught with danger for one so young as yourself.

Miss Montessor prides herself on having conquered what she calls English prejudices, and adopted French opinions in their place. The most sacred objects and established usages, — nay, the domestic affections, — are made the subjects of her *persiflage*; and she is too anxious to pass for a *bel esprit* in society, to

guard against being more than suspected of levity, irreligion, and heartlessness.

Break off your correspondence with her by degrees, or, if you have mental courage sufficient to *brusquer* it, do so; and call to mind the opinion of Lord Delaward expressed within a few minutes before I commenced this letter, — an opinion which I have often heard my dear father repeat, — that there is more danger to a young and innocent female in an unrestrained correspondence with one of her own sex who is unprincipled and heartless, than in an acquaintance even with men of light character, who possess not equal opportunities of instilling the poison of their false opinions.

I tell you nothing of my happiness, my dear Augusta, but I hope you will soon witness it. It is the general custom for brides to write inflated descriptions of their felicity to their friends: look for none of these from me;

and be assured that happiness, like beauty, can never be faithfully expressed by a picture, and perhaps the less easy it is to describe the more perfect it is.

Your affectionate

MARY DELAWARD.

THE LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

I CANNOT believe, dear Caroline, that you are really serious in half that you write to me; may I add, that I do not wish to think that you are? Indeed, you do not understand Lady Delaward's character; if you did, you would not imagine her to be a person affecting sentimentality herself, or encouraging its display in others. If you value my friendship, do not attempt to ridicule those I love and respect;

for, though I give you full permission to laugh at me, I am peculiarly sensitive with regard to them.

The unbecoming levity with which you refer to the frequency and facility of divorce, both shocked and pained me. How could you jest on so grave a matter, or remind me of examples of conduct in our sex so humiliating to reflect on? It is this proneness to treat with ridicule subjects which should be ever exempt from its assaults, that often and seriously offends your good aunt, and alarms those whose good opinion I so much wish you to obtain. Conquer this unfeminine propensity, dear Caroline; for, be assured, its indulgence is highly injurious to you.

We dined yesterday at Lord Seymour's, where we met two London beaux; one, Lord Annandale, and the other, Sir Henry Beaumont. The first is good-looking, and has the appear-

ance of being extremely well satisfied with himself, perhaps too much so : and yet, I like to see men of fashion possess a certain confidence of manner ; it renders their attentions more flattering. Besides, he who greatly admires himself, must find many charms in that woman with whom he is disposed to share his hitherto self-engrossed admiration. Sir Henry Beaumont is not so good-looking as Lord Annandale ; he has lank hair, which I detest ; while Lord Annandale's floats in hyacinthine curls, and sets off his face to the greatest advantage.

The Ladies Seymour evidently wished to attract Lord Annandale, and he as evidently was so unmindful of their fascinations as to bestow a large share of his attention on me ; which, to judge from their looks, was any thing but agreeable to them. They were forced to be content with the assiduities of Sir Henry Beaumont, who seemed almost

afraid to look at me, when he observed that I had monopolised the entire attention of Lord Annandale. What a difference is there in the appearance and manner of Lord Annandale, and Lord Delaward! In the presence of the latter, I experienced a degree of restraint which almost amounted to *gêne*; while in that of the former I feel as perfectly at my ease as if we were old acquaintances. And yet I should like to have a husband whose dignity repelled familiarity from all but me: not such a one as that ceremonious lord of whom we read, who, when his young wife embraced him, told her that his former countess, though a Howard, *never* took such a liberty.

Our host has invited Lord Annandale to spend two or three days here; an invitation which he accepted with evident pleasure, and not without insinuating to me that I

was the magnet which attracted him to Howard Castle. I am not sorry to have this place enlivened by the presence of a beau; for, to confess the truth, the sententious conversation of Lord Howard, and the admiring assents of papa and mamma, are more instructive than amusing. I wish you were here—a selfish wish, you will say—as I have mentioned the *tristesse* of this *séjour*; but, I believe we are always most disposed to desire the presence of our friends, when we most require the exhilaration it inspires.

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF
NOTTINGHAM.

MY DEAR NOTTINGHAM,— Here, I am in the feudal chateau of the Howards! the last place where I expected to find myself; and to which I have been attracted by the beautiful daughter of Lord Vernon, who, with her father and mother, are staying here on a visit. I met them at Lord Seymour's, when at dinner, two days ago, and Lord Howard asked me to come and pass a short time with him; an invitation I should assuredly not have accepted, had not the bright eyes of the fair Lady Augusta appeared to sparkle with complacency when it was made. You can fancy nothing half so brilliant, so beautiful, and so joyous, as this same Lady Augusta. She resembles nothing earthly that I have seen, or unearthly that I have imagined, except it be the *beau-idéal* of a

Hebe. The most luxuriant tresses, of the fairest and most silken texture, eyes blue and radiant as the heavens, cheeks of rose, and lips of carnation, and a skin white and polished as—what shall I say? not marble, for that is hard—not snow, for that is cold—not satin, for that sounds like a man-milliner comparison—like nothing, that I ever saw before, or, I verily believe, shall see again, except in her. Then, her figure! by Jove, it is matchless! All the elasticity and bounding animation of the child, with all the rounded beauty of contour of the woman. Arms that might serve as models to the sculptor; hands that look as if only formed to play with flowers; and feet that seem almost too small to bear the beautiful figure, in which she excels all other women. No, my dear Nottingham, even after this description, you can no more form an idea of Lady Augusta Vernon, than I could

have believed that such transcendent loveliness existed, until I had seen her. She is a perfect child in manner and in mind, and a little of a spoilt one too, I should imagine, from a certain half pouting, half laughing look, with which I saw her resist some interference of her father, relative to a horse that he thought too spirited for her to ride. You should have seen the *air mutin* with which she maintained that she could perfectly master it; and yet, it was the arch vivacity of a playful child, and not the wilfulness of an obstinate woman, that she displayed in this little contest with papa. If ever again I should put on the chains of the saffron-robed god, this is just the creature to tempt me; and I should be the envy of all the men in London, could I present her there as Lady Annandale, before the roses of her cheeks have faded, or the brilliancy of her eyes been dimmed, by a London

season, which is so destructive to the freshness of beauty. Envy me for being under the same roof with this divinity; I know you would, if you could see her!

Tout à vous,

ANNANDALE.

LADY AUGUSTA VERNON TO LADY DELAWARD.

DEAREST MARY, — Though we shall meet in a few days, I know you wish to be kept *au courant* of the state of health and spirits of your dear father. He is well, and as cheerful as can be expected, during the first week of separation from an only child—and such a child! Until I saw the effect your absence has produced, I was not aware how much of the happiness of a parent is rent from him,

when, by the departure of his child from the paternal home, he is left to look at the vacant chair, the silent harp, and the untouched piano. How gloomy, then, appears the dwelling where no daughter's greeting meets him in the morning, and no fond good-night awaits him ere he seeks his pillow! This is all doubly experienced, when a mother shares not the solitude of a father thus bereaved; and I have endeavoured all in my power, although, I fear, inefficaciously, to supply your place to Lord Howard. I feel as if my affection for my own parents had increased, since I have witnessed how dear and essential a daughter is, to the happiness of the authors of her being.

We have had a visitor here for the last two days— Lord Annandale. He is agreeable and good-looking, and, in every respect, far superior to the men I have been accustomed to see. I can hardly believe that he has been a

husband, and is a father; for, he appears almost as lively and unthinking as myself: and I have ever associated in my mind a pensiveness, if not a gravity, with my ideas of those who have filled those serious and responsible capacities. Lord Annandale has been giving me such glowing descriptions of London, and its pleasures, that I pine to be there, and to partake them. I wish I was seventeen, for, at that age I am to be presented; *mais, hélas!* it wants eleven long months to that period. Lord Annandale treats me quite as if I had been *out*, and has told me a good deal of the London gossip: he has been a little ill-natured in laughing at the Ladies Seymour, in which I fear that I too readily joined; but there was no resisting the drollery of his mimickry. He says, that they are as ambitious of conquests as ever Napoleon was, though not so successful; and, that, unlike

him, they keep no *corps de réserve*, as they bring all their forces into the field, at once. Lord Annandale is just the sort of person that Caroline Montessor would like. *A propos* of her : I cannot, dear Mary, give her up, it would look so unkind and ill-natured. Indeed, you do not render her justice ; for, though I must admit she is given to *persiflage*, she is kind-hearted, and well-meaning, and very much attached to me. You talk so quietly of your happiness, that, though I cannot doubt, I do not feel disposed to envy it. But, you will scold me if I say more, and prove to me, as you always do, that *you* are right, and *I* wrong, though always your affectionate

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LADY DELAWARD TO LADY AUGUSTA VERNON.

Delaward Park.

CAN it be possible, that you, my dear Augusta, can join in the laughter of Lord Annandale against the Ladies Seymour? His ridiculing them to you, betrays that he had discovered in you a propensity to be pleased by his ill-natured raillery — a poor compliment to your heart. I know Lord Annandale, and think him vain, affected, and flippant: but, let me not, while censuring his malevolent propensity, merit a similar imputation, by commenting too severely on his faults. I would only impress upon your mind, that a man who indulges in satirical gossip is always a dangerous, although he may be an amusing companion. Nothing implies a light estimation of our sex more than the habit some men have of seeking to entertain us at the expense of our

female acquaintances ; and, when we encourage their malice by our smiles, we justify their bad opinion. You say, that Lord Annandale's glowing description of London, and its pleasures, makes you wish to be there, and to partake them ; and that you sigh for the completion of your seventeenth year, that you may enter into fashionable life. If I know your heart, I pronounce that disappointment must await you in that glittering circle where you anticipate only happiness ; and where *pleasure*, though at a distance it may look like the unearthly guest, loses all resemblance when nearer approached.

If you are determined to persist in your correspondence with Miss Montessor, do, at least, make up your mind to reject her counsel, and shun the adoption of her false opinions. I dwell not on the evil consequences which an intimacy with her may produce, by alarming the good and prudent from seeking you. Her levity and

indiscretion in avowing her principles — or want of principles, I should rather say — have driven from her many of her own sex, and impressed the other, with notions most prejudicial to a young woman. Serious as this consideration may be, I am more alarmed by the certain risk which your morals incur in an intimacy with her, than by the probable injury which it may entail upon your worldly prospects. Be on your guard, dearest Augusta; read none of the French novels she recommends; and, if you will not break with her, at least discourage her levity as much as you can. We expect you to dinner on Thursday: need I say how glad I shall be to see you again?

Your affectionate

MARY DELAWARD.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

LORD ANNANDALE is still here, dearest Caroline; and, were we not going to Delaward Park to-morrow, would probably continue here as long as we may do, or at least as long as his convenience permitted. Shall I, or shall I not confess, that he has declared himself my suitor, and that I, though somewhat loath, have listened to his prayer, and referred him to papa; who, however, and mamma, seemed more surprised than pleased at the avowal of his attachment to me. They pleaded, in opposition to the demand, my extreme youth and inexperience — my ignorance of the world — and their desire that I should not marry until I was at least eighteen. All their reasoning only served to increase the ardour of my suitor; who implored me with such zeal and

passion, that I consented to tell my mother that *my* happiness depended on my union with him.

She, dear good soul, — having shed a few tears at the declaration, that the happiness of her Augusta depended on any one save her, and papa, and having expressed some wonder that, on so short an acquaintance, a serious attachment *could* be formed, and some doubts that I could be happy away from parents who adored me, — sought papa, to tell him what I desired he should know. No sooner had she left the room, than I wished to recall her. Her last observation had touched a chord in my heart that vibrated painfully; and I asked myself, while tears streamed down my cheeks, whether, indeed, I could be happy, away from the dear, the indulgent parents, whom I was willing to abandon for a man unknown to me a few weeks ago? I felt tempted to follow her

to my father's room, and to adopt their rejection of Lord Annandale, or, at least, to retard my acceptance of him for a year or two: but shame, and a dread of the imputation of giddiness and vacillation, to which so rapid a change in my feelings might have given rise, checked the impulse; and I remained weeping in my room, frightened at the dilemma into which my own weakness had reduced me, and awaiting with dread, the result of that intercession on the part of mamma, for which, only a few minutes before, I had warmly pleaded.

How strange is the human heart! or, at least, that specimen of it which is now throbbing in my breast. While listening to Lord Annandale's passionate entreaties to be his, I fancied that he was dear to me—nay, almost believed my own assertion, that my happiness depended on a union with him; yet, now that my parents have yielded to

his solicitation, supposing that this concession was necessary to the peace of their child, I feel as if he had become indifferent to me, and I wonder how I could ever have imagined that I loved him.

When subsequently he came to me, all rapture at the consent of my father, and thanked me for having obtained it, I experienced an instinctive desire to tell him the state of my feelings: but shame again withheld me, joined to a latent doubt of the possibility of another change in my sentiments; consequently, I let him pour out his impassioned vows of eternal affection and gratitude, while I coldly suffered, instead of participating his happiness. Surely I do not, cannot, love this man, or I could not feel thus coldly on such an occasion: yet, he is handsome and agreeable, and, a few hours ago, I thought him much more than this. Counsel me, dearest Caroline; tell me if there

is yet time to avow to my parents the real state of my inclinations, and to be equally candid with Lord Annandale. It seems to me to be cruel to let him continue in the erroneous belief that I love him, when the illusion has vanished from my own mind; and yet how miserable will such an avowal render him, adoring me as he does!

No, I have not courage to inflict unhappiness on another: let me rather bear it myself, since to my own levity, and want of self-knowledge, it is due. I am now sensible that I have been dazzled and flattered by this, the first passion I have inspired; and that I have mistaken the transient gratitude occasioned by gratified vanity, for a more fervent sentiment. Lord Annandale has told me, that he fears Lady Delaward may prejudice me against him; and that this apprehension was one of the reasons which urged him to press his suit before I had

again seen her. He attempted to pass some ill-natured pleasantries on her prudery, and old-fashioned formality of manners; said that she disliked every one who was not as straight-laced as herself: but I checked his raillery, as I cannot bear to hear Lady Delaward spoken ill of by those who judge her only from a cold exterior. To-morrow, we set out to Delaward Park, and Lord Annandale goes to his seat in Gloucestershire. I feel a sense of relief at our separation; for, he is so overjoyed and happy, that my calmness, if not gravity, forms a contrast not pleasant to me, and not, I should think, likely to be gratifying to him. If all women leave their accepted lovers with as little regret as I have experienced in separating from mine, why, then, I envy neither the lover, nor the loved.

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA VERNON.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF
NOTTINGHAM.

CONGRATULATE me, my dear Nottingham, for I am the happiest dog alive this day. You will be ready to exclaim, with the Lord C., on a similar occasion, some fifty years ago, "Every dog has his day;" but I will forgive you the assertion, for I am too happy, too proud, to cavil with any thing at present.

"Well, well," I fancy I hear you ask, "what does all this joy mean? Is there a change of ministry, and is he premier? or has his horse won at Newmarket? Has his worst enemy lost half his fortune at Crockford's, and has *he* gained it? or, has he got the twenty-thousand prize in the lottery?"

No, *mon cher!* none of these auspicious events have occurred; but I have drawn a prize in the lottery of wedlock, that has ren-

dered me more happy than if each and all of them had happened. I have proposed for, and been accepted by, the most beautiful and fascinating of her sex, who has just enough of the angel in her composition to elevate her above all other women; and just enough of the woman to make a lover go mad, if she chose to take it into her head to torment him. Papa and mamma are the most primitively good persons on earth, knowing little of our world, and scarcely dreaming that vice or wickedness exists. They idolise their daughter, as well they may, and were unwilling to consent to her marrying for two years to come. But, I won on Lady Augusta's pity, by displaying the love I *felt*, and the despair I did *not* feel: for, *entre nous*, I was sure of talking her over to take my side of the question, by giving her a few insinuations that papa and mamma were treating her as a child. This

suggestion, aided by my vehement protestations of affection and grief, soon settled the affair; and induced her to tell mamma that *her* happiness depended upon our union. You know that I had determined on never again entering the pale of matrimony; a resolution that I should have faithfully kept, had I only seen the belles of Almack's galloping, waltzing, or quadrilling, for — husbands; or cantering in the Park, to catch some Nimrod. No; your London beauty, with pale cheeks, languid eyes, and uncountable accomplishments, would not have made me captive: but, this creature — as fresh in mind as in person, full of health, of hope, and joy — there *was* no resisting. I shall be disappointed if she do not produce an amazing sensation in the fashionable world. Her beauty is so brilliant, that it must command universal homage; and her *naïveté* has nothing rustic in

it. She has been so much accustomed to be admired, nay, worshipped, by those around her, that she is more likely to receive the general admiration of our circle as her right, than as a subject for gratitude. And yet, there is nothing insolent in her pretensions: a consciousness of beauty and power may well be pardoned in a creature fair enough to warm the frozen heart of a Stoic, and lively enough to keep that heart in perpetual agitation.

To-morrow, *ma belle fiancée*, and her papa and mamma, leave this place, with Lord Howard, for Delaward Park. I know I am no favourite with the Delawards, who are very formal, stuck-up people; and who, were I not an *accepted* lover, might be very likely to influence Lady Augusta, over whom Lady Delaward has long exercised an empire founded on affection. I feared this empire, and en-

deavoured, once or twice, to ridicule Lady Delaward, to my *future*; but, she resented the attempt most warmly, and, therefore, I have ever since avoided the subject.

I return to Gloucestershire to-morrow, and shall be in town in a few days, to put all *en train* with the lawyers, who now-a-days make as many difficulties in letting a man marry, as they formerly did in unmarrying him; consequently, a modern marriage-settlement seems more like an agreement drawn up between two hostile parties, mutually apprehensive of fraud, than of two loving persons going to be made one. The Scotch term of married *against*, instead of *to*, has always struck me as peculiarly felicitous. But here am I *plaisantant* respecting that state into which I am so anxious to enter! perhaps on the principle of anticipating the *mauvaises plaisanteries* of my friends. Adieu,

au revoir, as I conclude you will be in town by the time I arrive there.

Tout à vous,

ANNANDALE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LADY A. VERNON.

AND so, *ma chère* Augusta, you have accepted Lord Annandale! This surprises me not, neither does it displease; but, I confess, your sentimental scruples as to not liking him made me laugh, though they vexed me a little too. How much have you to learn, *ma bonne!* You are fortunate in having secured a *bon parti* without passing through the tiresome ceremony of *coming out*; and being exhibited through a whole season, perhaps *two*, to those disposed to take unto themselves

a wife. A demoiselle, however charming, is always placed in a *fausse position* under such circumstances, even in England, where unmarried women have so much more liberty than in other countries; I congratulate you, therefore, on having escaped that ordeal of patience, being "a *belle* of a season," and entering the fashionable world as a married woman, giving the *ton* to, not taking it from, others.

I have never seen a group of our young *débutantes*, at their first presentation at court, without being reminded of the horses, mules, and asses, in Italy, decked in plumes and tinsel, on the *fête* of St. Anthony, and led to be blessed by that patron of animals, preparatory to their exhibition for sale; while those who intend to purchase, flock round to examine their points and paces. You have escaped all this humiliation; and, instead of approaching royalty as a blushing novice, to obtain a

lascia passare for fashionable life, you enter the court, with a matron's tiara of diamonds encircling your brow, and the passport of beauty, rank, and fashion, signed by Hymen's coronet. And with all this, and other "appliances to boot," you hesitate; and think, pretty innocent! that, because you do not love him who is to bestow, you ought to decline them! This is really being romantic *en vérité!* Lady Delaward herself, your Minerva, could not betray a more absolute and fantastic delicacy. Lord Annandale is *un homme du monde*; amusing, and willing to be amused; with no inconsiderable portion of vanity, and with a mind that refers all his own actions and those of others to the opinion of that society whose suffrages alone he seeks and values. How he would laugh at your romantic scruples, were you, in the simplicity of your heart, to confide them to him! Be assured, *ma chère*, that

it is by no means necessary that love should be the prelude of matrimony. *Au contraire*, to those who intend, as sensible persons ought, to live in the world and do as others do, this selfish passion would be the greatest hinderance to comfort in a *ménage* conducted on the principles of those formed in fashionable life. Were you "in love," as this calamity is styled, with Lord Annandale, *you* would find the frequent absences imposed by business or pleasure on all men, a constant and irritating source of chagrin; and *he* would find your murmurs, or grave looks, on such occasions, any thing but agreeable. That he should *admire* you greatly is very desirable, because it will ensure your empire over him, without subjecting you to the *ennuyeuses* restrictions, and *exigences*, which husbands who are in love with their wives impose. The more *he* admires you, the more will he be gratified by the admi-

ration you excite in others : hence, you may count on more liberty, and consequently on more pleasure, than fall to the lot of those women who conjugate the verb to *love* with their husbands ; a connubial process which, commencing with, *I love, thou lovest*, soon becomes enlivened by *he loves*, and, better still, *they love* ; until all terminates in the past tense, we *have loved*. Before, however, this fatal stage of the conjugation arrives, how many unhappy hours, and lowering clouds, must the matrimonial horizon have known ! Yours will be exempt from all such ; and your happiness will afford pleasure to no one more truly than to your

CAROLINE.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

Delaward Park.

IT is strange, dearest Caroline, but nevertheless true, that your worldly wisdom is much less congenial to my feelings, than are the pure, and, as you call them, severe principles of Lady Delaward. There is something so heartless, so calculating, in your system, that I turn from it with dislike; and your letter, which was forwarded to me here, has vexed and disappointed me. You should have seen the meeting of Lady Delaward and her father, and the affectionate and respectful attention Lord Delaward pays him, and then you would not, *could* not, depreciate the power of love; for, every courtesy to the parent indicated the warm attachment which the husband bore to the daughter. You should have seen, Caroline, the glances of deep,

but silent tenderness, with which Lady Delaward repays her lord for each and all of these acts of attention ; and even *you* must have become sensible of the inestimable value of that sentiment which produces such effects. It is now that Lord Howard is repaid for all the chagrin he felt at his daughter's departure from his roof. In witnessing the happiness of *her* well-ordered home, he ceases to remember that *his* has become lonely ; and the deep, the devoted attachment of her husband, manifested in a thousand daily proofs, consoles him for having yielded her to him.

I like Lord Delaward more every hour. There is a kindness and cordiality in his manner towards those he considers his friends, that receives additional value from his stately courtesy to mere acquaintances. It may be only fancy, but I sometimes think that there is something of pity mingled in the

kindness he evinces towards me ; Lady Delaward, also, often looks at me with a pensive gaze, as if she augured ill of the engagement I have formed. She asked me whether it was irrevocable, and whether I loved Lord Annandale ? I was on the point of throwing myself into her arms, and avowing all my feelings ; when the recollection, that my poor mother had told her that it was *I* who had vanquished hers and my father's objections, sealed my lips, until I had acquired sufficient firmness to answer in the affirmative, while my heart rebelled against the falsehood of the assertion. Since then, she has, evidently, been very guarded in communicating to me her opinion of Lord Annandale ; and from this conversation I date the inexplicable pity which seems to pervade her and Lord Delaward's feeling towards me. And yet, there are moments when I ask

myself, whether, in thus uniting myself to a man I do not love, I am not rendering myself an object of pity?

Yesterday, we drove through the beautiful park here; and Lady Delaward stopped at a "cottage of *gentility*," which, though *not* displaying a "double coach-house," was, nevertheless, by the neatness, nay, elegance, of its structure, well entitled to that appellation.

"I must introduce you to a very valued friend of my husband's," said she to my mother, as we were marshalled through a light and cheerful little vestibule, by a rural Hebe, in the shape of a handmaiden, to one of the prettiest and most comfortable small libraries it has ever been my good fortune to enter.

"I have brought you my dear friends, Mrs. Ord," said Lady Delaward, presenting us to one of the most ladylike women

imaginable ; who, though past the meridian of life, still possessed considerable remains of beauty. By her were seated two lovely girls, of seventeen and eighteen, one drawing, and the other embroidering, whose beaming eyes sparkled with pleasure at seeing Lady Delaward. The ordinary salutation over, my mother, after gazing attentively at Mrs. Ord, who also looked at her, rose from her seat, and, approaching her, demanded whether she did not recognise the friend of her early youth, Elizabeth De Vere ?

Scarcely had the question been uttered, when the friends, for such they had been, though long years had separated them, and different destinies had led to an ignorance of each other's fate, were, with tears in their eyes, embracing, and mutually presenting their children. You know the warmth of my dear mother's feelings ; and they were now greatly

excited by this unexpected meeting with one for whom she had formerly entertained a strong attachment. Lady Delaward, who is all kindness, was scarcely less delighted than were the friends, who having evidently much to say to each other, she proposed a ramble in the garden ; to which the lovely daughters of Mrs. Ord conducted us.

My mother told me last night, that Mrs. Ord had been the daughter of the Bishop of St. Asaph, one of the nearest neighbours of her father. Soon after the death of the bishop, who held his see during too short a period to have been enabled to make much provision for his daughter, she left the neighbourhood to reside with her aunt. At this time, my mother, having accompanied my grandfather to Italy, for the recovery of his health, in a rambling life, lost sight of her young friend ; who, it appears, subsequently to her father's death, be-

stowed her hand on the Rector of Delaward, who had been the tutor, and continued, while he lived, the dear friend, of Lord Delaward. The worthy rector closed a life of virtuous usefulness three years ago, leaving his excellent wife and two daughters, with a son at college, but scantily provided with the gifts of fortune. The rectory becoming the residence of the present incumbent, Lord Delaward arranged the charming cottage we saw for the widow of his friend; and has settled a comfortable annuity on her for life.

All this Mrs. Ord told my mother, with tears of gratitude; interspersing the narrative with anecdotes of the rare generosity and untiring goodness of her benefactor, whose strength of mind, as she justly said, is only equalled by his kindness of heart. Mrs. Ord and her daughters have already learned to love Lady Delaward, who feels towards them as if

they were the friends of her youth, because they have stood in that relation to her husband.

No, dear Caroline! all that I see here proves to me that virtue and goodness are not, as you would fain persuade me, obsolete prejudices, or chimeras of a romantic brain. All around me breathes of content and peace, and I seem to exist in a purer atmosphere. The excellent qualities of my dear father and mother appear to proceed as much from a happy temperament as from a sense of duty. Theirs is the indulgent virtue that “rather loves to praise, than blame;” nay, I doubt whether they *could* blame—so gentle, so loving, is their nature. They would pity and weep over the errors they wanted courage to correct; while others would ward them off by a more steady and severe discipline. The Delawards will be the guardian angels of their children, watching each incipient approach of

error, and erasing every embryo of vice ; while my dear parents would be the pitying angels, that try, like the recording angel of Sterne, to blot out with tears the spots they could not prevent.

I wish you were here, Caroline ; this atmosphere of goodness would heal every worldly wound that makes your feelings rankle, and you would no longer be a sceptic in the salutary power of virtue. Never be one in the sincerity of the affection of your

AUGUSTA.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF
NOTTINGHAM.

I FIND myself, my dear Nottingham, in a devil of a dilemma ! The Comtesse Hohenlinden, with whom, as you know, I last season formed a *liaison*, has heard of my approaching mar-

riage, and chooses to think herself exceedingly ill used. Now this is too preposterous—*mais quoi faire?* She has great influence in a certain clique, which is precisely that clique with which I most desire to stand well; and *Sa Seigneurie* is apt to be any thing but patient whenever any of her knights turn recreant to her charms, which (*entre nous soit dit*) are fast falling into the sear and yellow leaf—*raison de plus*, as you will say, for resenting any slight offered to their *manes*. We know how *méchante* she can be; and, I confess, I cannot anticipate with any degree of placidity “the slings and arrows of outrageous” ridicule she will let fly at my devoted head, if I do not find means to appease her.

I have thought of a mode of accomplishing this desirable point, and yet without sacrificing either my love for Lady Augusta or my interest with the comtesse. I shall per-

suade *Sa Seigneurie* that my marriage is an affair *d'intérêt, de convenance, de tout ce qu'elle voudra, enfin*; and that my affection is hers, and hers alone. The circumstance of Lady Augusta being an heiress will give a colour to this protestation, and the vanity of *la comtesse* will make her yield a ready credence to it. Do you not think my plan an excellent one? I have not been a diplomatist so long, without having acquired the art of temporising with contending interests; and I flatter myself I shall manage the affair *à merveille*.

I understand that Wilmot is *dished*, and his effects about to be served up to his hungry creditors. I want you to tell Joe Anderson to buy his carriage-horses for me; and if his wife's diamonds are to be sold, as I conclude they will be, send your factotum to bid for them for me. I will go as high as six thousand for them.

I wish you would call at Barker's, to see how the carriages I ordered are going on.

Yours ever,

ANNANDALE.

P.S. — Are the reports I have heard true, as to Wilmot having detected *madame son épouse* in a *liaison* with his friend Neville? I hope not; for, as according to the old proverb, in love as well as in sin, *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*, I might be brought into a disagreeable scrape; for Neville knows that I was his predecessor in the good graces of Madame, and, to save his purse, would be quite capable of stating that fact; and though, judging by myself, *on ne revient pas toujours à ses premiers amours*, husbands are rather prone to this old-fashioned system, and make the past flame pay for the present. They manage these things better in France, *n'est-ce pas?*

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LADY A. VERNON.

You really grow incorrigible, *ma chère* Augusta. Was there ever any thing half so uncharitable as your wish of seeing me *plantée* at Delaward Park, in what *you* style an atmosphere of goodness, but which *I* more correctly name an atmosphere of dulness? I should die under the infliction.

And so, the modern Grandisons pity you, forsooth! And you, *pauvre petite*, sometimes think it is a lamentable affair to marry a man one is not in love with! It certainly is a melancholy fate to be wedded to a well-looking, well-bred, well-situated man of rank, with just talents enough to render him too useful to be left out of a cabinet, and just wisdom enough not to commit himself when in it; with fortune enough to prevent your

ever being *génée*, and fashion enough to set the seal on yours. And this, you *sometimes* think a position to be pitied! *Fi-donc!* tell it not in Ascalon, publish it not in Gath.

What a charming little romance one might make out of your sentimental episode of "The Tutor's Wife, or Virtue Rewarded!" I have already sketched out the plan; but, the *dénoûment* would, I think, be different from what you would imagine. I would make your puritanical Lord Delaward's kindness the result of a *tendresse* for one of Mrs. Ord's fair daughters, instead of a friendship for his *ci-devant* tutor, her defunct spouse; Mademoiselle seduced; Lady Delaward *au désespoir*; Mrs. Ord, do. do.; and the wicked lord looking as foolish as Joseph Surface, when Lady Teazle was detected behind the screen. Shall I send this plot to George Sand? Only fancy what passionate declamations it would originate in

the prolific brain of the author of "Jacques!" George Sand would probably make Lady Delaward commit suicide, to leave her lord at liberty to atone for his wrongs to mademoiselle; and mademoiselle, not to be outdone in generosity, would follow her disinterested example: Monsieur Milord would go mad—in decency he could do no less: and Mrs. Ord and her remaining daughter would erect a white marble cenotaph to the memory of "One too good for life," meaning the betrayed; on the urn of which they would daily place bouquets of *pensées* and garlands of *immortelles*.

Is not this very French, and very sentimental? and are you not very much obliged to me for enlivening your "atmosphere of goodness" with this little sketch *à la Française*? *Addio, cara!* love me as I am, and do not be so *méchante* as to abandon your old friend

CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO LORD
ANNANDALE.

MY DEAR ANNANDALE,—I have secured the horses for you, and the diamonds likewise. I do not approve your plan of conciliating the comtesse by a falsehood; for, I know she is capable of telling all her friends that you only marry an heiress because you are ruined, and that you are still more her slave than ever. Even without the sanction of your avowal of continued *tendresse*, *sa seigneurie* has so lively an imagination, that this, and much more, she would be capable of propagating, as a salve to her mortified vanity. Such a story coming to the knowledge of your bride, (and how many spiteful, envious persons might convey the tale in an anonymous epistle!) would be very injurious to your domestic peace. You would not, I presume, present your young and pure wife

to *la comtesse* and her *clique*; that is, you would only let them meet at those *re-unions* of fashion at certain houses, when hundreds are congregated together, much as at the Zoological Gardens, or Vauxhall, and where a bow or a courtesy, *en passant*, is all that is required. I am no male prude, Heaven knows; but I do revolt at seeing men suffer their wives to live on terms of familiarity with women of whose bad conduct they can entertain no doubt. Look, for instance, at Lattimer and Ribblesworth allowing their wives to associate intimately with women whose *liaisons* have been neither few, nor apocryphal: such conduct is indelicate and disgusting. But, to return to your *comtesse*: she is at this moment *entiché* with young Dormer, and shews herself up with him, *sans ménagement*. Can you not act the jealous, accuse her of infidelity, and so break with her for ever? This measure will save you

from the disagreeable dilemma of excluding her from your wife's circles; to which let me advise you to admit none but women who are, as Cæsar said his wife should be, not only pure, but unsuspected. I think I hear you, with a Mephistophiles' smile on your lips, ask where such are to be found? But I aver we have still many, very many, though they are not to be discovered in the circle in which you most live; a fact which only *mauvais sujets*, like yourself, doubt. Yours ever,

NOTTINGHAM.

LORD DELAWARD TO LADY DELAWARD.

Grosvenor Square.

I HAVE thought of you, my dear Mary, ever since I left our happy home. It requires no slight exertion of volition to tear myself from

you ; and this, our first separation, has taught me more than I had previously known — if that be possible — the happiness your presence can bestow. I miss you, I want your society, every moment ; and I often ask myself the question, how I have lived before I became acquainted with you ?

My business here shall be expedited as much as possible. I have ordered your suite of rooms to be newly furnished, and selected the colours I know you like. I have had a private staircase erected, to communicate with a suite above, which, I trust in God, will not be long tenantless ; and a thousand feelings, all novel and delightful, have passed through my mind in making these arrangements.

Yesterday, I met Lord Riversford at dinner, at my club ; and he, not knowing our intimacy

with the Vernons, announced to me, as news, the approaching marriage of Lady Augusta with Lord Annandale.

“ He marries her wholly for her fortune,” said Riversford, “ which is odd, as we always considered him sufficiently rich not to be compelled to marry for money.”

I replied, that the extreme beauty of Lady Augusta must always redeem him from the suspicion of interested motives in selecting her, even though she is an heiress.

“ You surprise me !” said Riversford, “ for *la Comtesse* Hohenlinden read to several of us, Annandale’s sentimental epistle ; in which he declared his unabated devotion to *her*, and alluded to his marriage, as an affair of *necessity*, not *choice*. Though the letter did not positively say that the *fiancée* was plain, the whole tenor of it left that impression on

our minds ; and *sa seigneurie* confirmed it, by asserting, that *la jeune personne est laide à faire peur*, and by pitying *ce pauvre Annandale*."

I find that Annandale has been a long time known to be a friend, and something more, to the *comtesse* ; and if, as his letter to her implies, he intends to continue his intimacy with her, I foresee much unhappiness, nay, more, danger, to your beautiful, but giddy friend. With Lady Augusta's extreme youth and loveliness, her great susceptibility and inexperience, and with a husband whose overweening vanity, and want of fixed moral principles, render him a most unfit guide for her through the labyrinth of fashionable follies, I tremble for her, in the position which she seems likely to occupy. All that I hear of Annandale renders me more than ever indisposed to this marriage. Would to Heaven there were any means of averting it !

Lady Augusta is, as you, my beloved Mary, told me before I knew her, a being full of generous feelings and fine sympathies with all that is good and noble; but easily excited, with more imagination than reason, — which at her age is natural, — and somewhat spoiled by the injudicious indulgence of her parents. She is a creature who, under the guidance of an honest and wise man, who loved her, and whom she loved, might be led to attain as much virtue as ever dignifies human intelligence; but, in the hands of a weak or unprincipled one, may become a source of misery to herself, and to those who are attached to her.

It makes me gloomy to think of what her lot may be; and *I*, — who know the inestimable happiness of wedded life, when founded on affection, and cemented by similarity of taste, and congeniality of sentiment, — pity, with all my heart, this charming young woman,

who is about to form ties that, I fear, will never be rendered holy or indissoluble by any of the causes I have mentioned. Endeavour, my dear Mary, to impress on her reason, without alarming her innocence, the urgent necessity of a dignified reserve in her manners; and a scrupulous avoidance of all persons of her own sex, whatever may be their rank or other advantages, whose reputations are tarnished. Nothing so much tends to depreciate the respect that virtue ought to inspire, and to lessen the disgust of vice, as seeing those whose own career is irreproachable, live on habits of intimacy with women of whose errors they cannot entertain a doubt. Injurious as are the examples of bad conduct, the impunity which too frequently attends the perpetration is still more fatally pernicious. It is the privilege to do wrong, tacitly yielded to some individuals, in a social

system so partial and capricious as ours, that breaks down the barriers of decorum and morality ; for, many a young and thoughtless woman has been led to ruin, by daily witnessing to what an extent imprudence and impropriety may safely be carried, when the pure and impure are received in the same circles, and on the same terms.

But, to quit this painful subject for one far more agreeable. I have been thinking, my sweet wife, that, could we induce your good father to take up his abode with us, we should all be the happier. *You* would not then have the apprehension of his loneliness, nor *he* the painful consciousness of having lost you. The more I experience the blessing of your presence, the more am I sensible how deeply he must regret separation from you. He would feel, in living with us, and sharing our domestic felicity, that, instead of losing

a daughter, he had found a son ; and I should have the delight of knowing, that, in studying his happiness, I was securing yours. In three days, with the blessing of God, I shall be with you. May good angels guard my love,
prays her devoted

DELAWARD.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

INDEED, Caroline, your last letter shocked me ; it seemed like sacrilege to read it beneath this roof, where every thing breathes of purity and peace. How little you know Lord Delaward, when you can, even in imagination, make him the hero of such a tale ! When I have seen the dignified and exemplary Mrs. Ord, and her lovely and virtuous daughters, I have felt as if I had sinned against them in reading,

and that from the hand of a friend, a story founded on the supposed guilt of one of those sweet girls. It is this levity, this ridicule of all that is good and respectable, that makes you incur the censure of those who are not, like me, prone to forgive it, in the consideration of your better qualities. And yet, Caroline, there are moments when I ask myself whether I ought to continue a correspondence in which sentiments are often expressed, and principles avowed, which are in total variance with all that I have ever been taught to believe praiseworthy. If you cannot think and feel as I do, learn, at least, to respect my feelings, and do not, by revolting them, prevent my continuing your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LADY A. VERNON.

YOU do with me as you will, *ma très chère*; *mais*, *en grace*, send me no more scolding letters, and I, *en revanche*, will try not to deserve them, by believing every one you know to be as good, proper, and wise, as yourself. Are you not satisfied, now? I shall be much mortified, if, after this act of contrition, you do not invite me to be your bridesmaid. Weddings bring thoughts of matrimony into people's heads, it is said, who had not, before, an idea on the subject; and who knows, if, among the chosen few selected to witness your nuptials, some lord of the creation may not, from thinking of the agreeable position of the bride, be led to pity the *disagreeable* one of the bridesmaid? which I hold to be one of the most lamentable to which poor spinsters are exposed. Fancy unhappy me, decked in virgin white, with down-

cast lids — a *figure de circonstance* which is, I believe, *d'usage* on such occasions, — wishing, all the time, that “ God had made *me* such a man ;” and that *I* was the proprietor of a certain baronial chateau in the north, a park in the south, a mansion in the west end of London, and a box at the opera ; as well as a certain other and still more precious box, bound in brass and of large dimensions, similar to one whose sparkling contents had excited my envy the day before.

All these virgin wishes would naturally produce a pensive expression of countenance, which would as naturally be attributed to an amiable disposition, and a deep conviction of the serious duties which marriage imposes. A woman that so properly feels this conviction must, of course, be likely to make a good wife ; and the man, with a free hand, an empty heart, and a full purse, who sees a poor brides-

maid wiping her eyes, as the chariot-and-four, with postilions with white favours, whisks off from her sight the blushing bride and exulting bridegroom, and does not speak comfort to her, *must* be a brute. Pity is, they say, akin to love; the pity once excited, (and what so likely to call it forth as such a scene as I have described?) who knows what may follow? and your poor friend may, from a weeping bridesmaid, be transformed, in due time, into a simpering bride. Do not mar the possibility of such a happy event, by not bidding to your nuptials your *amie dévouée*, CAROLINE.

LORD ANNANDALE TO THE MARQUESS OF
NOTTINGHAM.

IF your letter of advice had reached me in time, my dear Nottingham, I should have followed it; but when did advice ever come in

time? Advice is like experience; it always comes when it is too late for use. My letter to *sa seigneurie* was despatched twice twenty-four hours before yours arrived. She has accepted the salve I offered to her wounded vanity; and has written to me, saying, that, in pity to my *malheur*, she will take Lady Annandale under her protection, and render her *à la mode*. I could have well dispensed with this excessive generosity on her part. *Mais quoi faire?* Were I to exclude her from Lady Annandale's circle, she would become an active enemy; and I know the extent of her talents for *tracasserie* too well, to expose myself to their indefatigable activity.

I hope much from the great beauty of Lady Augusta; for the *comtesse* will hardly seek to exhibit her *fanés* charms near the youthful bloom of Lady Annandale — a bloom near which all other women look *fade*. For my

part, I shall affect to think my wife *rien de remarquable* in the way of good looks; an insensibility which this vain woman will attribute to my devotion to her; and it will console her vanity, which I know to be as excessive as it is sensitive, to believe that there is one man in London who thinks her more irresistible than her beautiful rival; and that that man is her rival's liege-lord.

The settlements are drawn, and on the 14th all will be in readiness for the nuptial ceremony. Lord and Lady Vernon have insisted that it shall be performed, with primitive simplicity, in their village church; when, probably, the rector who christened *la belle Augusta*—and her papa, for aught I know—will read me a homily on the duties of husbands, similar to one I heard on a like occasion some three years ago. Heigh-ho! how old it makes one feel, to recall to memory such

a remarkable epoch in a man's life as a marriage! The late Lady Annandale was a very beautiful and amiable woman; *mais*, not content with being good herself, she would fain have rendered every one else equally excellent; and, most of all, her unworthy lord. Poor dear soul! how pale and sorrowful she used to look, when I gave utterance to any of my opinions on religious subjects, or laughed at the peccadilloes of people of fashion! She tried to reclaim me, as she called it; but she "did her spiriting gently," and an unkind or harsh word I never heard from her lips, nor one implying a reproach, unless it might be the last, when she said to me, "We have been too much separated on earth, my dear husband, by a want of similarity of sentiments: let us not, with my last breath I pray you, be divided in a future state, by a want of religion, and a strict performance of all it enjoins."

Poor Mary! no husband who fell short of the virtues of a Wilberforce would have satisfied her; and I, Heaven knows, was the last man on earth to aspire to such perfection. Well, to leave the gloomy past, and return to the cheerful future. On the 14th, I am to be made a happy man; and I want you, my dear Nottingham, to come and see the ceremony performed. Lord and Lady Vernon will expect you on the 12th, so do not disappoint *votre ami*,

ANNANDALE.

LADY A. VERNON TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

You are a sad madcap, my dear Caroline; and, were I to judge you by what you write, I should consider you to be as unfeeling as you are lively. You shall be present at a certain

solemn ceremony which takes place on the 14th; and the nearer it approaches, the more solemn it appears to me. I am persuaded that, had I paid my long visit to Delaward Park before I had accepted Lord Annandale, I never should have acted thus; and even now I shrink, with secret repugnance, from the fulfilment of the engagement I have so unthinkingly contracted. The letters I have received from Lord Annandale have influenced my feelings quite as much as the various conversations on the subject of marriage, and morals, which I have had with Lady Delaward. He writes as only a man of pleasure would write to a woman who had as much levity and as little sentiment as himself. Notwithstanding his letters breathe of passion, it is not the sort of passion I wish to inspire; and, though I am no casuist, there seems to me to be an immeasurable distance between passion and love. The first may be

entertained without respect for the object, but the second and nobler sentiment must be based on it. Lady Delaward has inspired love ; and I (but why compare my unworthy self with one so infinitely superior?) have only engendered a *feeling* that the least estimable of my sex have often excited. And yet, may it not be, that Lord Annandale is incapable of entertaining love? This belief is, at least, more soothing to my *amour propre* than my previous supposition, and therefore I will indulge it.

The romance *à la George Sand*, that you composed on the subject of the amiable family of Mrs. Ord, falls to the ground ; for, instead of a melancholy tale of error, her eldest and handsomest daughter is soon to be united to Mr. Neville, the worthy rector of Delaward ; consequently, she will return to the home of her infancy, as its happy mistress. My dear father has determined to give young Ord

the next presentation of a living which, he expects, will soon revert to him—the prospect of which has diffused joy through the whole family.

Lord Delaward has been absent a week on business; and you should have witnessed the gloom and void, his absence spread over the whole circle here, and the cheerfulness his return caused, to feel how wholly the happiness of a family depends on the master. You should have seen the efforts, not always successful, made by Lady Delaward, to conceal her regret at his departure, her pensiveness during his absence, and her joy-beaming eyes at his return, to be sensible of the power of affection, and the happiness it can confer. But *you* will, perhaps, mock what appears to me so sacred; and such mockery I consider as little short of profanation. Never had I formed a notion of the comforts of a

well-ordered home until my visit here ; for mine, though abounding in all the luxuries of life, wants the animating spirit that only a young master and mistress can diffuse. The regularity at Vernon Hall appeared monotonous to me ; and the oft-beginning, never-ending, visitations of our country neighbours served only to render it more tedious. I had learned to dread the thrice-told tales of the deaf and old Lady Hamlyn, and the pointless *bon-mots* of her gouty lord. Lord and Lady Dorington's old news half set me to sleep ; from which happy state I was only awakened by their mutual contradiction of, " Indeed, Lord Dorington, it was not so ;" and, " You will permit me to know better, Lady Dorington." Then, the short-sightedness of our old rector, who never could distinguish me from my mother, the taciturnity of his curate, the loquacity of our doctor, and the

vulgarity of his fat wife, did not serve to enliven the periodical dinners at which these worthies graced the board of my paternal home.

Here, one day of every month is set apart for a grand dinner, given to all the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood, who are conciliated by a dignified hospitality; but, not encouraged to that indiscriminate familiarity which, to the total interruption of all the rational occupations of the luckless owners, converts so many country-houses into inns. The high character Lord Delaward justly bears in his county led all his neighbours to form a favourable estimate of his wife, before they could judge from experience how far she was entitled to it. This is one of the many benefits arising from a high character: it enables him who possesses it to shed a lustre on all that immediately appertains to him; and happy,

thrice happy is she, who derives honour from him who has chosen her for his companion through life. Heigh-ho! will such be my lot? Perhaps, I the more desire it, because I feel that my giddiness and inexperience require the mantle of a husband's superiority to cover them, and protect me from their effects.

We leave this the day after to-morrow; and with deep regret shall I quit a spot where I have learned to respect what I have hitherto been more disposed to scoff at—the scrupulous discharge of duties; a spot where I have been taught to think better of others, and more modestly of myself, by having had an opportunity of comparing my own weak, and vacillating character, with that of those around me. I should, under any circumstances, lament my departure from Delaward Park, which I consider the temple of domestic happiness; but, when I reflect that I

leave it to fulfil an engagement that my heart renounces, I feel doubly grieved. The foolish, the unpardonable desire, instigated by vanity, of throwing off the shackles of childhood, first led me to listen to Lord Annandale's flatteries, and to overrule the prudent objections of my family; and the more reprehensible folly of not acknowledging my weakness, lest I should be considered a child, has induced me to persevere in it.

The nearer the time approaches for pronouncing the irrevocable vows, the more do I dread this marriage; and yet I have not courage to avow my feelings to those who possess the power of extricating me. A presentiment of evil continually hangs over my mind. It was not thus that Lady Delaward met her affianced husband at the altar! Fool — fool that I am, to compare myself in aught with one so good, so wise as she! Come to

me as soon as you can, but come without mockery on your tongue, or ridicule in your eye ; for my heart is ill at ease, and my spirits are not in a tone to bear your *plaisanteries* just now.

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO MADAME
LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

Vernon Hall.

PITY me, *ma chère* Delphine! for here I am, doing penance in one of the most *tristes châteaux* in which ever luckless dame was immured for her sins. *Imaginez vous—mais, non,* you *cannot* imagine any thing half so horrid ; *ergo,* I must describe it. But, to begin at the beginning, as all tales should.

I told you in my last that I was to be present at the nuptials of a certain young friend of mine, *belle comme un ange*, and innocent, too, as an angel, if all we are told of them be true. My little friend has enough of romance in her composition to make half-a-dozen modern heroines — enough giddiness to compromise thrice that number — and enough sensibility to be rendered wretched at the effects which that giddiness may produce. She is the strangest imaginable *mélange* of all imaginable qualities. Proud, without being vain, generous to profusion, impatient of restraint, yet docile as an infant under the influence of tenderness: loving her parents excessively, yet jealous of their asserting any control over her actions — a paternal right which, to do them justice, they rarely, if ever, exercise. Her own feelings would lead her to desire to inspire a desperate, or, as you French call it,

une grande passion, à la Byron. Unhappily, too, she has been lately present at the marriage of a friend dearer to her than I am (though, strange to say, that friend is a stern Mentor, too), and she has also resided some time at the house of that friend, whose stately happiness has awakened the dormant pride of my little beauty. The consequence is, forsooth, that she is no longer satisfied with the passion of Lord Annandale, and ardently desires to inspire a grave, a dignified, a respectful sentiment. Ha, ha! the very thought of this fantastic foolery makes me laugh. Having accepted the first offer she received (for she is yet little more than sixteen, and has not been presented in the world), she discovers that she does *not* love the man she has promised to wed; yet, is ashamed of revealing this circumstance to her parents, lest they should consider her a weak, vacillating child; which

is precisely what she is, and a spoiled one into the bargain, by the unexampled indulgence of her doting father and mother.

All that I have now told you, Lady Augusta has written to me; and a little encouragement on my part would have led her to be equally confidential with her friends. But, this encouragement I did not, would not give her, for reasons of my own; nay, I have done all in my power to induce her to fulfil her engagement. Be it known to you, *belle et bonne* Delphine, that, being extremely tired of the society of *madame ma tante* in the country, and extremely anxious to pass the ensuing season in London, my sole chance for the accomplishment of this desideratum, is to get Lady Augusta converted from a giddy and useless *demoiselle* just emerging from her governess and nursery, into a *dame à la mode*; a useful chaperon, in whose bril-

liant mansion in town I may secure myself a *séjour*. I am eight years, *bien sonnés*, the senior of my friend, and have acquired an influence over her, of the extent of which even she is unconscious. Should her lord disapprove of my spending as much time as I choose beneath his roof, I can always, by insinuating to her that he treats her as a child, excite her to rebel against his power. At present, however, I see no probability of being necessitated to practise this stratagem, for, he appears very tractable.

I had intended taking up my abode for the season with *notre amie, la comtesse*; *mais, hélas!* some reports of her impropriety of conduct, that (*entre nous soit dit*) admit not of denial or defence, have reached *ma tante*, who would not hear of my resting a single night beneath her roof; nay, who will not hear of my keeping up any intimacy

with her. I had, therefore, no other chance of visiting the metropolis, except that of converting Lady Augusta Vernon into Madame la Comtesse d'Annandale; and this desirable metamorphosis I have accomplished.

On my arrival here, I found *ma petite* heroine, a second Niobe, all tears: her *futur* evidently mortified at her lachrymose propensity; her papa and mamma all wonder at her melancholy; and a certain Marquess of Nottingham looking as if he too could have wept, merely for the pleasure of keeping her company. This, you will allow, was an unpromising commencement; yet, I have, by the exercise of tact—that virtue acquired in your country, and which is more useful than all the others combined—managed to restore a good understanding between all the parties.

I persuaded the sapient papa and mamma, that all their daughter's chagrin arose from

regret at leaving *them*; and won their hearts by this protestation. I insinuated to *le futur*, that, when his wife had an opportunity of comparing him with other men, she would be better able to appreciate her good fortune in having secured him. Had you seen the radiant smile with which this compliment was received, you would have acknowledged, that flattery is worth all the cosmetics in the world for beautifying those to whom it is administered. From that moment, Lord Annandale was my friend, and a sort of confidential intimacy is established between us, which I mean to turn to good account. There is one person here, however, whom I cannot manage; and I hate him, for that reason. I allude to the Marquess of Nottingham, who seemed, from the first moment of our acquaintance, to recede from my advances with a sort of instinctive dread, or dislike. I have carefully concealed my discovery of this

sentiment, and continued to treat him with cheerful courtesy; but I have, nevertheless, frequently caught his eyes fixed on me with a scrutinising glance, more expressive of distrust than good-will.

His glances have not, however, all been confined to me; for, I have detected them fixed on Lady Augusta, with a mingled expression of admiration and pity, that was not to be mistaken. Her beauty, which I must admit to be of the first order, seemed to produce an overpowering effect on him when he was first presented to her. Her melancholy and *naïveté* have, apparently, increased his admiration; and I predict that, before a year, he will be *l'ami de maison*, instead of simply *l'ami de milord*, as at present.

Nothing could be more sentimental and *larmoyant* than the eight-and-forty hours passed here previous to *la noce*. Talk of the

ennui of the half-hour before dinner, passed in the library or drawing-room, while waiting for some unpolite guest, or dilatory *chef de cuisine* ! It is nothing to the *ennui* of the hours preceding a wedding, as I can now testify. Fifty times I expected that Lady Augusta, in a fit of sensibility, would have declared her aversion from the fulfilment of the contract ; and I am sure that, had she done so, Lord Nottingham would have rejoiced. I prevented this step, however, by drawing the most brilliant prospects of the future to her ; but still more, by my old stratagem, dwelling on the animadversions to which such a proceeding would expose her, and the certainty of being, for years to come, treated as a child by her father and mother. This last argument was, as heretofore, irresistible, and led her to the altar of Hymen, a reluctant, because an unloving bride.

Yet, even I—though little used to the

melting mood, Heaven knows — felt some uneasy twitching in the *muscle cru* called heart, when I saw the dreadful paleness her face assumed, and the large drops that chased each other down her young fair cheeks, as she approached to pronounce the irrevocable vows. Lord Nottingham, who attended as bridesman, was almost as *triste* as the bride; and Lord and Lady Vernon wept nearly as much as if death, and not a husband, was about to take off their darling. Previously to my arrival, I had meditated a little romance, of winning the heart of the bridesman by enacting the sentimental; but an hour in Lord Nottingham's company convinced me of the utter hopelessness of such an attempt, and so I at once relinquished it. I think I could much more easily have captivated the bridegroom; for he is a vain, a very vain man, and so prone to admire himself, that any woman, not quite

a fright, who vied with him in doing homage to his attractions, would stand a fair chance of being rewarded by his gratitude.

But, to return to the wedding. There we stood, more like some solemn procession than a hymeneal one : the bride clinging to her father's arm to the last, and looking like a maiden-blush rose, twined to a venerable oak, which bent down to shelter it from the storm ; Lady Vernon, pale and weeping, leaning on Lord Nottingham, who seemed nearly as disconsolate as herself ; and I, escorted by Lord Annandale, who was replying to my judiciously administered compliments, by warmly repeated invitations to spend some months with them.

Suppose, now, the due number of tears shed (and I protest there were enough to fill, at least, some fifty lachrymatories) ; the necessary responses pronounced, most inaudibly by

the bride, and sonorously by the bridegroom ; the nuptial benediction given ; and the sobbing Lady Annandale torn with gentle violence from the arms of her mother, and placed in the travelling-carriage of her lord ; which I saw driven off, with much the same feelings as those with which a shipwrecked sailor, on a desert island, beholds a vessel pass at a distance, which might have rescued him from his solitary fate. Lord Nottingham, in pity, agreed to remain two or three days here, and I have promised to stay a week ; at the expiration of which time I return to my aunt's, whose house, disagreeable as I have hitherto considered it, is less *triste* than this gloomy mansion, now that it is bereft of its sole attraction — the fair Augusta. In a fortnight, I am to join the Annandales in London ; where I anticipate much enjoyment, *en revanche* for this dull visit.

You would have smiled, as I did, *en cachette*, had you witnessed the dinner given in honour of the nuptials; and the host and hostess, between smiles and tears—the latter, however, greatly preponderating—doing the honours to guests who, with the exception of Lord Nottingham and myself, might have served as specimens for a zoological garden, if one was formed, to exhibit the *lusus naturæ* of the human race, instead of animals. In France, where there are no old people, either in dress or mind, you have nothing like the antediluvian figures that every country neighbourhood in England produces. In your gay land, you have old children, who have only exchanged, but not thrown by, their rattles; while here, most, if not all the aged people, give one the idea that they never could have been young children.

In the innocence of my heart, I attempted

a few *plaisanteries*, at the expense of some of the lame, blind, and deaf, who formed a part of the *Hôpital des INCURABLES* assembled round the dinner-table: but the pragmatical Lord Nottingham maintained a look of immovable gravity; nay, rebuked me with a remark, that he never saw any thing risible in the infirmities of age. I have now described the delectable pleasures of an English wedding to you; and bestowed my tediousness half in pity to your expressed curiosity, and my own want of a more agreeable occupation. Write to me how you amuse yourself: that's the best way of telling how you are; for one is never ill when amused. Adieu, *chère Delphine!*

Votre amie affectionnée,

CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.*Vernon Hall.*

I PROMISED, my dear Mordaunt, to write to you a description of our friend Annandale's bride; but, were I to tell you even half what I think of her, you would accuse me of exaggerating her charms as much as we believed Annandale to have done when he described her to us. Annandale confined his panegyrics to her beauty only; and even to that, I think, he did not render justice; but, he said nothing of the innocence, the candour, and, above all, the modesty of her manner, which, in my eyes, constitute her greatest charm. She possesses a thousand attractions; each and all irresistible for one who requires more than mere beauty, however brilliant, to satisfy a fastidious taste; or rather, let me say, that craving for the ideal, which

haunts every heart not quite seared or sullied by contact with the world.

Lady Annandale is precisely the realisation of an enthusiast's dream ; and a poet would be ready to prostrate himself before her whom the common herd would dare to profane with their love. Well may Annandale triumph at obtaining such a prize—a prize for the possession of which thousands will envy him ; yet *I*, who am penetrated with a sense of her all-subduing charms, would not accept her hand to-morrow, were it offered to me with the same symptoms of evident distaste which marked all her conduct to him, from the moment he arrived, until that which saw her torn from the arms of her mother. This inestimable boon was not

“ Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
And sweet reluctant amorous delay ;”

but with tears and undisguised indifference.

He felt not this; but *I* would have preferred death, to fulfilling an engagement which seemed so painful to *her*. Can she have formed another attachment? Yet, no; for, knowing as she must do, the unbounded affection of her parents, she could not doubt their readiness to extricate her from this engagement, or consent to her contracting another, if her happiness, which is their sole and whole object in life, depended on such a measure.

Having witnessed the repelling coldness with which she shrank from Annandale whenever he approached her, a thousand vague notions have entered into my mind, as to the probable motives of her extraordinary conduct. More than once I have fancied that she repented her intended alliance, and wished to annul it; but, that a friend of hers, considerably her senior, has by her influence induced her to complete it. This friend is a Miss Mon-

tressor — handsome, clever, and accomplished ; but with a freedom of manner, and peculiar expression of countenance, that prepossessed me most unfavourably against her, before I had been an hour in her society. Instead of betraying any sympathy in the feelings of her youthful friend, she *brusqued* her to a certain degree ; nay, more, I frequently caught her eyes fixed on her, with an expression of contemptuous pity for the weakness, as her looks seemed to imply, of which Lady Augusta was guilty. She was very assiduous in her attentions to Annandale, and seemed, at a glance, to discover what we have long known ; namely, that he is a vain man, and likes flattery. He was loud in her praises, and has invited her to spend the season in town with them. What an ill-chosen associate for so young and inexperienced a woman as Lady Annandale ! I hope he may not have cause to repent his invitation ; and that her levity and freedom of manner

may not entail on his wife any of the ill-natured animadversions in which the *cliques* of London are so prone to indulge, and for which Miss Montessor seems so well disposed to furnish cause.

A bold woman is, to me, one of the most offensive objects on earth. I have always felt disgust for such; though it has often been mitigated by recollecting in how many instances their husbands have been conducive to this fault, by their want of delicacy, or by the improper associations they have allowed them to form. But, when an *unmarried* woman emancipates herself from all the constraint that modesty and propriety prescribe, my disgust is unmitigated by pity. I am one of the few who maintain that modesty may survive the virtue it was meant to guard; but that virtue rarely, and only then, by chance, or calculation, outlives modesty.

I go hence in a day or two, on a visit to the Delawards, who reside in this county. I have staid here to console Lord and Lady Vernon, who were intrusted to the tender mercies of Miss Montessor for consolation ; and they are to come to Delaward Park, as soon as they have left Miss Montessor with her aunt. They are the most primitive people you ever saw ; full of goodness and warmth of heart, and knowing almost as little of the world as does their daughter, whom they love with all the blind idolatry peculiar to parents who, having married late in life, have only one object on which to lavish all their affection. To be able to appreciate the natural superiority of a creature, who could be so idolised, and by such excellent people, without being wholly spoiled, one ought to have seen her as I did, during the last three days ; when, though oppressed by the deepest melancholy, her con-

sideration for the happiness of others was always apparent. I could discover strong feeling, and no little portion of self-command, in the yet unformed character of this lovely woman ; who, though little more than sixteen, displays the embryo of qualities which, if rightly directed, might render her as great an ornament to her sex, by her conduct, as she is at present, by her matchless beauty. I cannot think of her in the hands of our good-natured, but worldlyminded friend, Anandale, and the not good-natured, and more worldly-minded Miss Montessor (two beings totally incapable of comprehending her), without trembling for her fate.

The day of the nuptials the disconsolate old couple returned to their now gloomy mansion, the sunbeam that illumed it having fled. My feelings were in unison with theirs, and they were evidently sensible of my sympathy,

which seemed to comfort them: while even the assiduities of Miss Montessor partook so much of the hardness and bantering tone that pervades her character; that they shrank from the commonplace consolations she offered.

At any other period I might have smiled at the guests assembled to do honour to the bridal feast; for a more strange assortment of indigenous specimens of the gentry of a remote province, I never saw. Cruikshank would have made a fortune by representing them as illustrations of all the maladies to which senility is heir. But, when one heard the praises, "loud and deep," of the bride, that fell from their lips, even while regaling on the dainties before them, it was impossible, for me at least, to smile. No feeling of this nature checked the malicious smiles of Miss Montessor: she is, I am quite convinced, a very heartless woman.

The seat that Lady Annandale used to occupy was filled by a certain old Lady Hamlyn ; who, extremely deaf, was, like most deaf persons, very anxious to hear all that was said at table. Her querulous demands of, " I beg your pardon — pray, what did Lady so and so, or Lord so and so, say ? " called forth a repetition of the lamentations for the departure of Lady Annandale, or praises of the turtle and venison. Truth to say, the laudations bestowed on the bride, and the luxurious dinner, were nearly equal in quantity and quality.

" Poor dear Lady Augusta !—what a loss to us all ! Well, well, it is what all must come to ! "

" What did Lady Dorington say ? " screamed out Lady Hamlyn.

" What delicious venison ! " exclaimed another.

“What did she say?” again asks Lady Hamlyn.

“Only that the venison was very delicious,” answers Lord Dorington, spitefully repeating what one speaker had said in place of another.

“I asked what Lady Dorington said,” reiterated Lady Hamlyn, angrily.

“Oh! she was only remarking that marriage is what we must all come to,” replied Lord Dorington, with a grave face.

“All come to, indeed! I don’t see any one here, except the young laughing lady there,” looking at Miss Montessor, “who is likely to come *to that*.”

During this bald, disjointed chat, Lord and Lady Vernon continued to gaze upon the place where their lovely daughter used to sit; and many a tear did I mark stealing down the

pale cheek of the fond mother, as she turned from it, to seek sympathy in the glance of her husband. I could have shamed my manhood, and wept too, when, on entering the drawing-room, I saw the now silent harp, that answered so melodiously to the taper fingers of the beautiful Augusta ; the flowers she loved, drooping on their stands ; and the different objects of feminine utility she was wont to use, all of which retain their places, though she they were destined for is far away. How I could have worshipped this creature ! But it is madness to indulge in such a thought.

Believe me, my dear Mordaunt, yours ever,

NOTTINGHAM.

THE LADY AUGUSTA VERNON TO
LADY DELAWARD.

ERE I seek my pillow, dearest Mary, I must open my oppressed heart to you. Ah! why had I not courage to do so, before it was too late? But, I am a very child; and, alas! with more of the wilfulness of childhood than generally falls to the lot of even the weakest of my sex. To-morrow, Mary, I bestow my hand on one, whom, every moment proves to me, I do not, cannot love.

I made this discovery even in the hour that my entreaties won the reluctant consent of my dear and too indulgent father, and mother; but false pride, and the shame of being considered childish, and vacillating, have induced me to conceal the real state of my feelings from them. Often, while at Dela-

ward Park, have I been tempted to make to you this unhappy avowal. Why, why did I not? for then, all would have been well. It was not, my dear friend, until, beneath your roof, I was a witness to the happiness to be derived from a marriage of affection, that my eyes were quite opened to the loveless, cheerless destiny I had, by my own folly, prepared for myself. But, even then, I struggled against the conviction. I tried to think, that when I saw Lord Annandale again, my reluctance might decrease; but the result has been otherwise — far, far otherwise; and I am the victim of my own wilfulness!

Why do I tell you all this *now*; when, before the avowal reaches you, my fate will be irrevocably sealed? Alas! I divulge it to you, because my very soul is steeped in sadness; and I have no one here, to whom it can be revealed, that would pity me, except those from

whose affectionate hearts I would conceal it for ever. To leave the home of my infancy, even with one beloved, would always have been attended with pain ; but to leave it with one for whom I entertain only indifference, is dreadful. A fearful presentiment of evil oppresses me. I feel as if I were about to abandon this place for ever ; and now, for the first time, I am penetrated with a sense of all the tender, the too indulgent, affection of my dear father and mother, and all the gratitude it has excited in my breast.

During the last few days, I have often thought, that to dwell here, as I have hitherto dwelt, surrounded by loving faces and affectionate protectors, would be happiness enough. Why did I ever wish for any other ? How empty, how puerile, appear now the brilliant dreams in which my prurient fancy has indulged, of the gaieties, the splendours, of a

fashionable life in London! when I should shine, for my brief minute, among the evanescent meteors of the season, that flash and disappear. I turn from these my frivolous anticipations, at this moment, with feelings such as I might experience on the bed of death; and wonder, and grieve, that they could ever have dazzled me. *He*, who appeared as the necromancer who was to conduct me through the magnificent scenes he so glowingly described. now looks like the baffled mountebank that manœuvres his puppets before children, who, having examined their mechanism, and detected the springs that move them, despise alike the exhibition and the exhibitor. Had I never witnessed the happiness—the rational and soul-satisfying happiness—which you enjoy, I might never have felt the reluctance I now experience to enter a career of dissipa-

tion, piloted by one who seems to think pleasure the end and aim of life.

I am sensible that I stand perilously in need of a high-minded and discerning monitor, to guide me through the mazes which I must enter; one who could not only give me a clue to the labyrinth, but still linger by my side, to support and cheer me. I require some fond heart in which I can confide—some firm mind, on which I can depend; and now, with a fearful consciousness of the almost vital necessity of these safeguards, I have forged fetters that bind me to one nearly as blind as—nay, more blind than myself: for, my inexperience awakens a salutary alarm, while he is steeled and dulled, by custom, to the dangers I can discern, but know not how to escape. I feel as if, in having precluded myself from ever forming a marriage of affection, I had closed

the only door to happiness that ever was open to me. Tell me, in pity tell me, my dear Mary, that, though I have missed that portal of felicity, there is still another, less seductive, yet not to be slighted—that of content; and I will endeavour to reach it.

Lord Annandale has never demanded why I wept, why I was plunged in sadness, ever since he came to claim my hand. Had he questioned me, I might have been saved; for such a demand would have led to an avowal of my feelings. *Now* it is too late; and I count the hours of freedom that still remain to me, as one on the bed of death does those of his fast-fleeting existence. Never have I thought of the dread hereafter so frequently, nor with so little alarm, as during the last few days. It no longer seems terrific to quit this fair earth, and the blue skies that canopy it, when one's fate is linked with that of a

being from whom separation would occasion no sorrow. No! it appears to me as if the rending of such chains would console me for bursting the chain of life. Think of—pity—and, above all, love, your

AUGUSTA.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

Delaward Park.

My friend Delaward is indeed a lucky man, my dear Mordaunt; for, he has chosen a woman whom it is impossible to see without admiring, or to know without esteeming. I never saw a *ménage* that presents so tempting an example to a Benedic to forswear his solitary state, as Delaward's. One soul, one mind,

seems to animate him and his lovely wife. Here is no disgusting display of the uxoriousness so often and indelicately protruded before friends, during the first months of wedded life, and as often followed by the indifference that succeeds unwisely indulged passions, leading to their inevitable result—satiety. No! perfect confidence, warm admiration, profound respect, and boundless content, reign between this happy couple, and bid fair to continue while they live. Lady Delaward is at once the most dignified and simple-mannered of her sex; one, before whom no man could utter a light word, or breathe an unholy thought. An atmosphere of pure and elevated sentiment seems to environ her; and all who approach are influenced by it. There is nothing chilling or repelling in her demeanour; for, though she has all the dignity of a matron, she has all the gentleness of a

child : but, there is an indescribable charm around her, that precludes the entrance of the vulgar and commonplace topics with which we entertain the generality of her sex ; or rather, to speak more accurately, the fashionable portion of it.

To tell Lady Delaward any one of the piquant anecdotes, or *histoires à double entente*, that are daily related to the women of our coterie in London, would require an impudence that not even A—— possesses ; though he, Heaven knows, is no pauper in that social bronze which, like the famed Corinthian brass, contains all the elements of durity, additionally hardened and consolidated by the fierce fires to which it has been subjected. I worship that native purity which innocence alone can give, and which shines forth in every look, word, and action, of Lady Delaward ; while I turn with disgust from

that affected prudery, arising, if not from a participation, at least from a knowledge of evil, which induces certain of our ladies to cast down their eyes, look grave, and shew the extent of their knowledge, or the pruriency of their imaginations, by discovering even in a harmless jest something to alarm their experienced feelings. I respect that woman, whose innate purity prevents those around her from uttering aught that could wound it, much more than her whose sensitive prudery continually reminds one that she is *au fait* of every possible interpretation of which a word of doubtful meaning admits.

And Lady Delaward, this “chaste and fair,” but not inexpressive she—for she talks as angels might be imagined to talk—is the friend of Lady Annandale, and loves her as a younger sister. Nothing is more captivating to me than a cordial affection between two

young and beautiful women. Perhaps it is its rarity that constitutes its charm; for nothing is more rare, notwithstanding the well-acted *rôles* of friendship we continually see got up in society between women who entertain a mutual detestation.

The unstable basis of such ephemeral fancies is selfishness; hence, it is not to be wondered at that the fragile superstructures soon totter and fall to the ground. A share in an opera-box, similarity of pursuits, a knowledge of each other's *liaisons*, — which precludes embarrassment in those quartettos that invariably occur wherever these female Pylades and Orestes appear, are the motives of half the friendships existing among ladies of fashion. They herd continually together, address each other by the most loving epithets — pour into the ears of their admirers a thousand secrets of the concealed personal and moral

defects, and the numberless artifices of their dear friends, to which they have recourse, in order to supply the want of beauty. It is thus we learn that poor Lady so and so, or Mrs. so and so, would be the most delightful person in the world, only that she happens to have every physical and almost every moral fault that ever fell to the lot of woman ; but, the greater part of which, owing to the blindness or stupidity of the world, are left to be discovered by the discriminating eyes of her dear friend, who relates them with such professions of regret at their existence.

Of how many women, whose complexions I have praised, have I not been told by their supposed devoted friends, and not without a smile at my ignorance, that they wore rouge ; until I almost began to doubt whether such a thing as a real rosy cheek, proceeding from

pure bright blood circulating within the epidermis, were a desideratum possible to be found. Every very fair woman I saw, was, as the *sincere* friends of each informed me, indebted, not to nature, but art, for that delicate tint. In short, their frank and explicit confessions brought me to consider every handsome woman as a sort of modern Thisbe, peeping behind a wall of white and red. But this was not all. The jetty locks I admired were, I was informed, the properties of the ladies they adorned, only because they had *bought* them; the pearly teeth I praised, were *chefs d'œuvre* from some fashionable dentist; the dark eye-brows that struck my fancy, owed, I was told, their rich black to the newly invented die; and even the red lips, emulating the hue of coral, had been tinged, as my informant stated, by a chemical preparation. Such being the disclosures made by

friends in fashionable life, it is not much to be wondered at that I am incredulous as to the sincerity of the sentiment of friendship between fine ladies.

I have hitherto only believed it to exist in the mind of an acknowledged beauty towards some remarkably plain but well-bred woman, who served as a foil to her, and did not hate her for her own inferiority. I am, however, no longer a sceptic as to female friendship. Lady Delaward, young and beautiful, feels it, in the utmost signification of the term, for Lady Annandale. Hers are not the praises that artful women, themselves handsome, think it prudent to bestow on any other beauty named in their presence; cunningly selecting her defects for their exaggerated eulogiums, and leaving unnoticed, in their panegyrics, the charms that would have justified them.

No; Lady Delaward, when I extolled the personal fascinations of Lady Annandale, simply answered, "Yes, she is the most lovely person I ever saw." But, when I said that she appeared very amiable, her countenance sparkled with animation, and her cheeks became tinged with a brighter hue; her whole face, while under the glowing effects of her warm affection for her friend, reminding me of one of those fine alabaster vases, with a light in it, that displays even more its own spotless purity, than it illumines the objects around it.

"You should have known Augusta," she said, "as I have done, since her infancy, to be able to appreciate all the admirable qualities she possesses; qualities which not even the undue indulgence of her doting father and mother has been able to obscure."

"I do not like her friend, Miss Montessor," observed I.

Lady Delaward was silent; but a grave expression stole over her face.

“Neither do we,” replied Delaward; “and I heartily wish Lady Annandale may see as little of her as possible, for I think her” —

“Hush! my dear Delaward,” said his wife, gently; “we must not prejudice others against her.”

At this moment a letter was brought to Lord Delaward, who, having broke the seal, handed its enclosure to Lady Delaward, who exclaimed, “A letter from dear Augusta!”

She eagerly opened it; and I remarked that, as she perused it, her brow indicated that its contents gave her pain. This sentiment evidently increased as she continued to read; and, at length, she rose and quitted the room, as if overpowered by her feelings.

Delaward hastily followed her, and left me,

I candidly confess, experiencing for the first time in my life, an insatiable curiosity. Lady Annandale has, probably, in this letter, explained the source of the sadness in which I saw her plunged the three days previous to her marriage. How I should like to read it! It is strange, it is unaccountable, the deep interest I take in her. Had I beheld her all gaiety and smiles, I should, if I know myself, have merely thought of her as a beautiful girl, like one of those lovely creatures we see, admire, and forget. But her melancholy and apparent indifference towards Annandale, have invested her with a much deeper interest for me than her beauty, faultless as it is, could ever have excited. What can that letter have contained, to awaken such regret as was displayed in Lady Delaward's looks and manner?

I must leave you ; a necessity, at which the length and dulness of this epistle will make you rejoice.

Yours ever,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

HERE, I am, *chère et belle amie*, once more *chez ma tante*, who is even more *ennuyeuse* than ever, which is saying a great deal ; and who preaches morality to me from morning until night. You should have seen your poor friend demurely seated, *vis-à-vis* to the patriarchal Lord and Lady Vernon, in their family coach, returning to the temple of *ennui*, as I style the mansion of *madame ma*

tante; listening to the oft-beginning, never-ending praises of their daughter, who, if they are to be credited, is a perfect paragon of perfection; while I know her to be nothing more nor less than a very pretty, capricious, spoiled child, wilful and froward in no ordinary degree. Perhaps it is this very knowledge that makes me feel attached to Augusta; for, paradoxical as it may appear, it is easier to pardon the faults, than the virtues of our friends; because the first excite a self-complacency always agreeable; and the second, a sense of humiliation, which indisposes us towards the inflictor.

After all, it is a very agreeable thing to have a doting old papa and mamma — doting in the double sense of the word — who look at all one's thoughts, words, and actions, through the bright medium of affection, and not through the dull one of reason, as my

sapient aunt views mine. I really believe she considers me as nothing short of a very wicked person ; for, the homilies with which she indulges me on every possible occasion, prove how greatly she imagines me to stand in need of them.

The Vernons, *mari et femme*, are gone to the modern Grandisons, as I call Lord and Lady Delaward ; where they are to remain some time, to be consoled for the loss of their daughter. They had made up their minds, I fancy, to accompany Lady Annandale, to town ; but, I advised Lord Annandale not to encourage this intention, unless he wished to be the subject of ridicule to all London, by importing this antediluvian couple (in their old-fashioned coach, which resembles the ark of Noah) into the fashionable world, to shock universally, and be universally shocked. I tried to enlighten my friend

Augusta on this point ; but she, who knows nothing of the manners of society, was indignant at even the supposition that her dear father and mother could ever be *de trop* any where ; so I left her to indulge in her parental illusion, and directed my counsel to her lord, who is more tractable.

Lord Nottingham preceded the Vernons to Delaward Park. I like not that man ; and, I fancy, there is an instinctive dislike between us. He is the *beau idéal* of an Englishman : proud, reserved, and dignified, with a degree of self-respect that precludes him from ever compromising himself ; and with that scrupulous good-breeding, which deprives those who dislike him of the pleasure of attacking him. He is a man whom it is impossible to ridicule ; nay more, he imposes a certain respectful restraint, even on his opponents, by his high bearing and polished manners.

His mind seems to be very cultivated, and his person and face are remarkably *distingués*; the highest praise, in my opinion, that can be accorded to male good looks. He is the sort of person *à faire fureur à Paris*, and to remain wholly unmoved by his success; and yet, "this most potent, grave, and reverend signior," is evidently captivated by the *naïve* loveliness of a spoiled child of sixteen, having hardly deigned to bestow a glance on the matured charms of your friend. I tried him with all my witcheries,—let fly a shower of *bon-mots*, *réparties*, and brilliant anecdotes, that would have covered me with laurels in your *recherché* circle in the Rue St. Honoré; but, they fell as unheeded as a display of fireworks before an astronomer examining the *début* of the last new comet. I then assailed him with piquant criticisms on all the modern French authors: talked of the

vigorous power of Victor Hugo ; the mysticism and sentimentality of Balzac ; the passion and eloquence of George Sand ; the maritime descriptions of Eugène Sue ; the *comique* of Paul de Kock ; and the *hardiesse* of Jules Janin. The man, instead of being charmed, looked perfectly petrified ; and, without replying to me, turned to Augusta, and asked her, with a look of undissembled alarm, whether she had read those authors ? A weight seemed taken off his mind when she answered in the negative, and stated, that the only modern French books she was in the habit of perusing, were those of Chateaubriand, De Lamartine, and Casimir de la Vigne.

“ They are the writers that I also read,” said Lord Nottingham, “ and the ones that I should place in the hands of a wife, or sister.”

“ You surely cannot be so very English — which, with me, is a synonyme for prudish — as to object to a young lady’s perusal of the authors I have named ? ” asked I ; “ authors, whose works contain the truest pictures of actual life ? ”

“ There is much, very much in actual life, Miss Montessor, of which I should wish a wife or sister of mine, to remain in total ignorance. On this point I am ready to exclaim with the poet,

‘ Give me a friend, within whose well-poised mind
Experience holds her seat. But let my bride
Be innocent, as flowers, that fragrance shed,
Yet know not they are sweet.’ ”

“ Oh ! you,” I resumed, “ are one of those who would treat women as pretty puppets, formed for your playthings, and not admit us to a free communion of that knowledge of which you are so proud ? ”

“ I would debar your sex from no part of the knowledge of which ours ought to be proud ; but, I do not think, in proscribing the modern authors you have enumerated, such a motive could be fairly attributed to me. I would have the reading of women confined to works of which the morality and purity might serve to strengthen their own ; and I can no more approve of placing in their hands books that tend to make them acquainted with all the vices that sully human nature, however well portrayed, than I should approve their witnessing the scenes where such vices are committed, as a useful philosophical lesson. Women, Miss Montessor, according to my opinion, should know no more of the crimes of human nature, than they do of the fearful maladies to which it is subject. You would not have our matrons study anatomy, or visit the hospitals, in order to see to what infir-

mities flesh is heir; it is enough for them to be aware that mortal beings are sometimes sorely smitten by loathsome diseases, without investigating, or studying them: so, is it sufficient for them to know, that vice and error exist, without analytically examining the symptoms, causes, and effects, so artistically displayed in the authors to whom you have referred."

"You, probably, think we are only good, because we are what you would call innocent, and what I term ignorant, Lord Nottingham?"

"Happy and charming, I am sure you are, only while you are innocent," he replied; "for, a knowledge of evil, even though it guard from a participation in it, leaves a stain on the purity of the female mind, and a cloud on its brightness: for a high-souled woman, while abhorring the crimes she discovers, where she thought all was fair, must pity while abhorring; and deep pity dims happiness."

Augusta listened to him with an attention I never before saw her pay to any one; her eyes were fixed on his expressive face, which, always handsome, was now lighted up with increased animation; and I marked her turn from him, to look at the man who was, the next day, to become her husband, with a glance in which neither affection nor approbation was visible — to my eyes, at least. She was probably at that moment drawing a comparison between the two, not advantageous to the latter.

In this little discussion, and during the pauses of Lord Nottingham, Lord Annandale defended my favourite authors with more zeal than ability; consequently, his flimsy arguments rather injured than served my cause.

“ Surely, my dear Nottingham, you are unjustly severe?—Bah! *mon ami*, you are too prudish. What can be more droll, or more

amusing, than some of the scenes in the works you have censured? I quite agree with Miss Montessor in admiring them.—Well, you may say what you please; but be assured that you will find few people so cynical as not to be vastly amused by those writers.”

I tried to get up an argument on the romantic and classic schools of writing, and instituted comparisons between the passionate and reflective works of our day, giving the preference to the former. But all my erudition was thrown away, at least on Lord Nottingham, for he replied not to my tirade *à la De Staël*; but Lord Annandale seemed duly impressed with the extent and variety of my *savoir*, and has, I can perceive, formed a high notion of my powers. What *if* this *preux chevalier*, Lord Nottingham, were to become enamoured of Lady Annandale, and *if* she were to bestow on him her vacant heart—for vacant I know it

is—and *if* I were to blow the incipient flame into a blaze! I see a whole romance, nay, two romances, comprised in these three little — *IFS*. Should nothing more eligible, as the elderly ladies say, offer, I may effect a *dénoûment* to this pretty fiction, which may place the coronet of a countess on my brow, and a strawberry one on that of Augusta — no bad exchange for her, I think, and not a very bad arrangement for myself. In a few weeks I shall be in London, whence you shall be kept *au courant* of all I do, or intend to do. I hope *notre comtesse* will not, with her usual indiscretion, shew me up, by relating any of our little peccadilloes at Vienna and Paris; but she is a sad *bavarde*, and commits her friends nearly as much as she compromises herself, by her imprudence. *Addio, cara Delphine!* Wish success to your

CAROLINE.

LADY DELAWARD TO LADY ANNANDALE.

I WILL not dwell on the pain your letter has given me, my dearest Augusta, neither will I enter further into the subject of the imprudence you have committed ; retrospection being now useless, except as a warning for the future, dearly paid for by the experience of the little happiness to be derived from a perseverance in wilfulness. Lord Annandale is now your husband ; and I cannot think so ill of him as to believe that he would have become so, had he known your repugnance at the last to form the tie. It is formed, and is indissoluble ; and by this, your first and fatal error of judgment, you have placed yourself in a position to demand a never-ceasing prudence, and never-slumbering self-examination, to enable you to fulfil the duties you have imposed on yourself. To a wife who loves her husband those duties

become pleasures, because she knows that on their fulfilment depends his happiness, as well as her own; but to one who is so unfortunate as to marry without a sincere and devoted affection, they should be, if possible, more sacred, as their scrupulous discharge is the only atonement she can offer for withholding that love which is to sweeten the draught of life; and which every man has a right to expect from her who voluntarily bestows on him her hand. Many have been the marriages without love that have been peaceful and respectable, if not happy. You, my dear Augusta, having committed a serious fault, must redeem it by your virtue; and prove, that not to be wise, is not to be unworthy. Leave no effort untried to attach yourself to Lord Annandale: gratitude for his attachment to you ought to excite kind feelings; and, when to this is added the knowledge, that, had you not accepted his offered

hand, he might have found many lovely and amiable women who would gladly have become his wife, and given him their affections, you surely cannot act otherwise than as a kind, indulgent friend, who will make his home cheerful, and his name respected. You must seriously examine your opinions and sentiments with regard to him; for indifference or dislike are great magnifiers of the defects of those whom we view through their medium, and we are seldom just when we permit their intervention. If he is not *all* that you could desire, despair not of rendering him so; for much depends on the use you make of the influence you will naturally acquire over him. Lord Annandale has lived too much in the great world to have escaped the faults it engenders; its glare and artificial enjoyments may have, probably, blunted the fine edge of his feelings, and led him to descend to less wise,

and less elevated views and pursuits. Let it be your task to lead him back to a more healthy tone of mind, and to more rational occupations; and be it yours to reap a rich reward, in the consciousness of duties fulfilled, and of tranquillity, if not happiness, secured. Remember that he bears a portion of the chain that binds you together — a chain to which he willingly submitted, because he believed that you would make his bondage light, in preferring him to all other men; a natural conclusion, knowing, as he does, that it was solely owing to your request that your parents yielded him your hand. Virtue, generosity, pity, all call on you, my dearest friend, to respect his happiness, even though you may have sacrificed some portion of your own. You owe this fulfilment of your duty no less to your excellent father and mother than to Lord Annandale. Think what would be their despair, if, having yielded

their daughter so much sooner than parents in general are called on to relinquish their children, and to a husband chosen by *her*, and not by them, they discovered that she had imposed on their credulous affection, and left them, who so loved her, for one she did not love. Spare them this blow, my dearest Augusta; and let your next letter bring better tidings to your true friend,

M. DELAWARD.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

Delaward Park.

I NEVER thought so seriously, nor with such complacency, of marriage, my dear Mordaunt, as since I have been beneath this peaceful and happy roof, which seems fitted to be the very temple where Hymen ought to be worshipped.

You know that Delaward was always my model of what a nobleman should be; but, I assure you, I now look on him as the model of husbands—a part, few, even of the best men, perform with that just mixture of firmness, tenderness, dignity, and equanimity, which is essentially requisite, and which he possesses in an eminent degree. I dislike those exhibitions of fondness that we so often witness during the first months of wedlock, in what are called love-matches,—designated to me, by a French friend, as *l'indécence légitime*,—almost as much as the ill-bred carelessness which too often succeeds them. The first is the most disagreeable of the two, because it indicates a want of modesty and delicacy in the woman who permits such exhibitions, and a want of respect for her in the husband who makes them.

A man should see in his wife, not an amor-

ous puppet, with whom he whiles away his idle hours, but the partner, the helpmate, God has given him as the solace of his weary ones; the woman who is to be the mother of his children, the mistress of his home, and with whom he is to walk, hand in hand, through the painful journey of life, to that eternity where they hope not to be divided. But when I see, every season, the marriages that are formed, and the motives that lead to them, I turn with repugnance from the contemplation. You remember that good-natured but weak man, Lord Allingham, who was induced to propose to a girl he had met at every ball for six seasons before,—without bestowing a thought on her, except to remark that her *tournure* was *gauche*, and her feet clumsy,—because some interested people about him assured him she admired him. He marries—discovers that he has made indeed a sad mistake; for he

finds that her temper is irascible; that her manner is even more *gauche* than her *tour-nure*; and her mind as blank as her countenance. Poor Allingham! but he is rightly punished for his vanity. One of our acquaintances marries a woman because half the men in town admire her; and another is piqued into marrying one who has admired half the men in town, because, with a laudable ambition, he wished to rival them in her good graces. A thought beyond the gratification of the present fancy seldom enters into their heads; and, that fancy satisfied, they are left at leisure to discover the defects, moral and physical, that now are as visible to their scrutiny as they were previously concealed. What follows? the poor woman, married through caprice, and neglected from the same motive, is mortified, if not wounded; and seeks consolation in a round of dissipation, where

she soon finds some idle loungeur, who by his attentions soothes her wounded vanity, while inflicting an indelible stain on her reputation, if not on her virtue. How many such women might, in the hands of a sensible and honourable man, have become happy and estimable! instead of serving, as is but too frequently the case,

“To point a moral and adorn a tale,”

in the circles in which they move. To trace effects to causes, all because they had been selected by some silly man as an object of selfish gratification, and deserted from the same motive. There is a mutual respect visible in all the conduct of Delaward and his wife, and a sustained tenderness, which never for a moment degenerates into that familiarity so disgusting in the *ménages* of newly married people. And this noble, this dignified woman, is the friend of Lady Annandale: what might not that lovely creature have become under

the tuition of such a Mentor! Delaward told me yesterday, that Lady Delaward had received a very melancholy letter from her friend.

“Poor Lady Annandale!” said he; “she deserves a better fate : for, though a good-natured and well-bred man, Annandale is quite incapable of appreciating such a person as his wife, or of rendering her happy. She staid with us some time, and I saw much to admire in her. All her fine qualities, and she has several, are natural to her; and all her defects, and they are but few, are the effects of the excessive indulgence of Lord and Lady Vernon, acting on a lively imagination and a quick temper. She had not been here three days before I saw a visible improvement in her, for the example of Lady Delaward had the best effect : but she is so young, and so much influenced by Miss Montessor, who, *entre nous*, is a very improper and dangerous friend for her, that I fear a season in London,

with its contaminating follies, will undo all the good that has been instilled into her by Lady Delaward.

I questioned Delaward further about Miss Montessor, and find that her aunt, a worthy and amiable woman, has been from early youth an intimate friend of Lady Vernon. A sister, many years her junior, married imprudently, and accompanied her husband abroad ; where, after twelve or fourteen years of continental dissipation, he was shot in a duel, and Mrs. Montessor and her daughter were left, with a scanty pittance, to subsist as best they could. The beauty and polished manners of the mother rendered her a welcome guest at all the houses of fashionable resort ; and being a weak-minded woman, without any mental resources, she abandoned herself wholly to the pleasures of society, leaving her daughter to the care of a French *femme de chambre*, whose morals

were as objectionable as her manners. Mademoiselle Annette was quite as fond of society as her mistress ; and the consequence was, that the poor child, left at home in her care, was initiated into all the mysteries of high life below stairs, and sipped her *café-au-lait* in the coterie of Mademoiselle Annette, consisting of half-a-dozen *femmes de chambre*, and as many couriers, or valets, who related the adventures of their respective masters and mistresses, past and present, with so much *naïveté* and graphic skill, as to make a deep impression on the mind of their unlucky little auditor.

The demoralising effect of such associates may be easily imagined ; and, when some *grossièreté* in the language of her daughter shocked the refined ears of Mrs. Montessor, and led to her ascertaining where it had been acquired, she issued peremptory orders, that henceforth her daughter was not to leave

her saloon, nor Mademoiselle Annette to introduce any one into it, under pain of her displeasure.

This mandate was equally painful to the young lady and the *femme de chambre*, neither of whom liked solitude ; but a mode was found of satisfying both, that was forthwith put in practice. Mademoiselle Annette was much addicted to the reading of French novels ; and by no means fastidious as to their morality. She suffered one of the most indelicate of those productions to fall into the hands of Miss Montessor, who devoured it with avidity ; and the artful *femme de chambre*, seeing the pleasure its perusal imparted, proposed supplying the young lady with a volume every evening, provided she might go and spend that portion of her time with her usual companions. The proposal was joyfully accepted ; the demoralising studies were continued ; and, before Caroline Montessor had completed her fifteenth

year, she had attained a knowledge of the vices and crimes of society, portrayed in all the seductive guises of sophistry and passion, that could gloss their immorality, or throw a veil over their indecency. She saw, in every man who entered the *salon* of her supine mother, a hero for one of the romances in which she was impatient to enact a part; and was culpable in imagination, long ere she became so in reality.

Her mother formed a friendship with a Duchesse de Meronville, who had a daughter of the same age as Caroline Montessor, and of similar disposition. The girls, like their mothers, became inseparable. The books that had achieved the corruption of Caroline's mind were lent to her friend, who, in return, intrusted her with all the secrets of the *pension* she had lately left: the captivating power of the *maître de danse*, who always pressed her feet, when placing them in the

fourth position, the *jolie tournure* of the music-master, who retained her fingers always half a minute in his, when placing them scientifically on the keys of her piano; and *les beaux yeux du maitre de dessin*, who always retouched her drawings, but not so often as he found means to touch her hand, in spite of the Argus eyes of *madame la gouvernante*.

Two young ladies, so impatient for adventures, were not long without encountering them. The Marquis de Villeroi, and his friend, le Chevalier de Carency, two fashionable young men, one a Parisian, the other a Swiss, making the tour of Italy, presented themselves at the hotel of the Duchesse de Meronville, whom they knew at Paris, and were, by her, introduced to Mrs. Montessor.

In a morning visit, before that lady had left her dressing-room, the gentlemen surprised the young ladies, who acted the parts of

heroines, according to the last novel they had perused, so skilfully, that the marquis and chevalier were interested, if not smitten. The *demoiselles*, observing the impression they produced, intrusted the gentlemen with the secret, that their cruel mothers kept them from all society, allowing them to converse with no one; and hinted that, if any desire was felt ever again to see the recluses, it must be early in the morning, when they were suffered, under the *surveillance* of a *femme de chambre*, to walk in the Cascina. The hint was not lost; a *douceur* to the *femme de chambre* secured her services; and the imprudent girls were permitted to walk in the most retired part of the grounds with their cavaliers; nay, to receive them at home in secret.

“ The Marquis de Villeroy, captivated with the pretty face of Mademoiselle de Meronville, was still more enamoured of the large for-

tune he knew she would one day possess, and determined on securing her hand : while his friend, having ascertained that Miss Montessor's sole wealth consisted in her beauty, directed to her only the most dishonourable views ; to which, ere long, she fell a victim.

“ The young ladies were equally compromised ; and both expected the same atonement would be offered. This hope was only fulfilled on the part of the Marquis de Villeroi ; for the day that saw him privately lead Mademoiselle de Meronville to the altar, witnessed the impromptu departure of the Chevalier de Carency from Florence, leaving Caroline Montessor a prey to all feelings save remorse ; for that sentiment, hers, unfortunately, was not a spirit to feel. The Duchesse de Meronville pardoned a step in her daughter that was now irrevocable ; and the Marquis and Marquise de Villeroi concealed the guilt of Caroline

Montessor, and extended towards her a friendship the sole basis of which was pity. A letter, soon after received from the faithless lover, under cover to Villeroi, gave the finishing blow to every womanly and proper feeling in this unhappy girl; and from the hour of its receipt may be dated the commencement of her total demoralisation. He stated, that in loving her, and seeking the gratification of that love, he but obeyed the dictates of nature and philosophy; and he left her from a conviction that their meetings would be interrupted by the *esclandre* which the marriage of her friend would occasion, or their pleasure be destroyed by reproaches, because he could not, or would not, like his friend, finish their charming episode of love, by a comedy *larmoyante* of marriage—a finale, which his poverty forbade, and his principles opposed.

“ ‘ You are young and charming, *ma belle*,’

he wrote, 'and may command a rich marriage, which should be the end and aim of every portionless beauty. When you have accomplished this desideratum, I shall be one of the most humble of your slaves ; but, until then, let me, as a friend, recommend you to be prudent in your conduct. The interests of women and men are wholly opposed : that of the one is to get married ; and that of the other, to avoid it by every possible means, unless driven to the altar of Hymen by the goading scourge of grim poverty, that gaunt spectre, who has *compelled* more victims to the fatal step than love ever *enticed* to it. Be circumspect, then, *ma chère petite* ; count on my discretion ; and let us hope to meet in Paris at some future day, when you shall have imposed the galling chains of marriage on one of your rich and dull compatriots, and emancipated yourself from the thralldom of *demoiselleship*. Wealth gives

every thing except youth, beauty, and health—these you possess; and, if you play your part skilfully, the riches you may attain. Keep this object always in view; and learn to smile at the *fade* sentimentality and romance, that never fail to subjugate your sex to ours. Adieu, *ma chère* Caroline; *aimez toujours votre*

HENRI.'

“ Caroline Montessor neither wept nor pined at this confirmation of the unworthiness of him for whom she had sacrificed her honour. The last French novel she had read, had displayed a heroine abandoned under similar circumstances, ‘ who rose (as the writer stated) superior to the blow aimed at her peace, and, ascending the pedestal appropriated to talent and wit, hurled around her the weapons of both; captivating, while wounding and mocking, the victims she made.’

“ ‘ Such will I be,’ said Caroline to herself;

and, from this day, she devoted all her time, all her energies, to acquiring a proficiency in those accomplishments most likely to aid her views. She was permitted by her foolish mother to accompany the Villerois, to Vienna, while she established herself as a resident in the Hotel de Meronville at Paris, with her duchesse, who offered her a home during the absence of the young people. At Vienna, the beauty and talents of Miss Montessor attracted general attention; and more than one of her admirers would have become suitors for her hand, had they not been alarmed from a step so irrevocable by an imprudent intimacy which she formed with the Comtesse Hohenlinden, whose conduct furnished the common topic of scandalous animadversion in every circle.

“The young Duc de R., at that period the cynosure of neighbouring eyes at Vienna, soon became fascinated with the English beauty;

and the comtesse, whose sympathy for the flames of others was in proportion to the indulgence of her own, lost no opportunity of affording him interviews with her friend. But Caroline, who, in adoption of de Carency's counsel, never lost sight of the prospect of a rich marriage, conscious that a *liaison* with the royal Duc would lead to no such termination, maintained her prudence ; and established for herself, in his eyes and those of the Comtesse, a reputation for virtue such as they, at least, had rarely encountered. The good Emperor lavished presents on the meritorious young woman who could resist his captivating grandson ; and Caroline Montessor became the fashionable belle of the court circle. Her intimacy with the Comtesse of Hohenlinden opened to her a new page in the history of human life. She saw in her a woman of high rank and great fortune,

almost wholly regardless, not only of virtue, but of its appearance, living only for the gratification of her passions; and so volatile and capricious, that the *engouement* of yesterday gave place to the one of to-day : and this woman, braving public opinion and outraging delicacy, was *fêtée* by all. No one doubted her culpability, and some censured, but *all* received her. Such an example fixed Caroline Montessor for ever in her false and pernicious principles ; and the *hommage* she saw offered to her guilty friend, finally overthrew in her mind all the barriers that separate the good from the vicious.

“ The works of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Diderot, were eagerly perused by this young female philosopher ; who found herself, at seventeen, a willing believer in their sophistries, and ready to do aught that could facilitate her course in the ambitious path she

had entered. She became the *confidante* of the Comtesse, who had now formed an attachment to the Marquis de Villeroi; and was, nearly at the same time, intrusted with a love affair of his young wife. Neither shocked nor disgusted at these disclosures, she encouraged both in their reprehensible conduct, because it rendered her necessary to them; and sank herself still lower, by this foul participation in their guilt.

“Returned to France, she continued to reside with the Villerois, over both of whom she had acquired an ascendancy that gave rise to a thousand evil reports. These reports were so generally circulated and believed at Paris, that they precluded the chance of her forming a marriage at all suitable to her views; and when, several years afterwards, on the death of her mother, her aunt, who came to Paris to offer her protection to

her niece, saw the supremacy she exercised in the establishment of the Villerois, and heard the reports in question, she gave her the alternative of returning at once to England, or of being altogether abandoned by her sole relative.

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“The wish of forming a good marriage in England, that Eldorado of rich husbands, induced her to accept her aunt’s protection, much to the dissatisfaction of the Villerois, who found her presence and lively conversation an agreeable relief to the dulness of their occasional *tête-à-têtes*, while she was ever a useful assistant to their plans of mutual deception. She left them, promising to return, if she failed in accomplishing her views. Subsequently, finding her aunt’s residence, where she had been a considerable time fixed, most uncongenial to her tastes, she contrived to render herself so agreeable to Lady Annan-

dale, that she has been a frequent guest at Lord Vernon's; and, I doubt not, has influenced his daughter in forming this marriage.

“ All that I have told you, I had from Lord Warrenborough, who heard it from the Chevalier de Carency himself at Turin, a short time after, when that dissolute man told it as an amusing example of his triumphs over female virtue: and I have communicated it to you in the belief that, having met Miss Montessor, the romance in which she has played so discreditable a *rôle* may amuse you. Judge, then, how Lady Delaward and I tremble for her poor young friend being beneath the same roof, and exposed to the contaminating example of such a person. Already has my wife endeavoured to warn Lady Annandale of the unworthiness of Miss Montessor, although, until yesterday, I never disclosed its extent to her. She considers, and I agree with the

opinion, that it is her duty to lay the fact before her friend, and will write to her immediately on the subject."

Here ended Delaward's tale to me, and here must end my voluminous epistle to you. Is it not worthy of a French novel? Poor Lady Annandale! into *what* hands has she fallen!

Ever yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

Grosvenor Square, April.

YOUR letter really alarmed me, my dear Mary; and I have asked myself, more than once, what mine could have contained to have called forth such anxiety, not about my feel-

ings (and they most required it), but my conduct, which, I trust, will ever be blameless. I do not, and feel I never can, love Lord Annandale; but does this fact indicate that I shall be an unkind or an unfaithful wife? I trust not. If you knew him, you would entertain no fears for *his* happiness, whatever you might for *mine*. As long as he sees me well looking, well dressed, and well received, he will be satisfied: a clouded brow, a paler cheek, or a stifled sigh, are not things to alarm him, or even to be remarked. He thinks there are only two species of women,—the romantic, who are the young, and who, knowing nothing of real life, indulge in the illusions of imagination, sigh for an ideal happiness, and shrink from the positive one within their reach; and the unromantic, who are not the very young, and, having lost all the illusions of life, are content with the

homely and unimaginative enjoyments it can bestow.

He concludes that I shall arrive at this last state in due time; and, *en attendant*, thinks that it is not unbecoming to see a very young woman pale and pensive. He does not know that, before youth has learned to discriminate, the heart sometimes becomes suddenly matured, and supplies the fatal knowledge which is usually the growth of experience. It seems to me as if I had jumped from childhood to maturity at one step; but that step has been over a precipice, in which my happiness has been engulfed. It is not, it surely cannot be, a spirit of envy that actuates me; but ever since I have seen *your* home, and witnessed how *you* are loved, my very soul has pined and ached with a consciousness of the want of a similar blessing. Were I so loved, and by

one I could respect, I think I could be happy, even though I felt not that fond, that lively tenderness, which I have seen sparkle in your eyes, and tremble on your lips, when your husband has approached. It is a sad thing to look at happiness only through another's eyes. It seems to me as if the being loved, cherished, and respected, by a good and honourable man, would be sufficient for happiness: one who mingled you with all his thoughts of this world, and all his hopes of the next; who left you with regret, and returned with delight; to whom you could reveal every sentiment, every feeling, as to a second self; one whose experience was to be your guide, and whose firmness, your protection. You and Lord Delaward give me the idea of two rational beings, united to divide the cares and share the blessings of life; while Lord Annandale and I remind me of two persons forming a

party of pleasure, into which as much amusement as possible is to be crowded, and who have no other ties, or aim, or end.

The evening we came to town, he proposed taking me to the opera: I declined, because I was fatigued, and wished to pass the first evening of my *séjour* in a house of my own, quietly at home. I explained these feelings; he assented, and left the room — to see to the comfort of my establishment in my own apartment, as I concluded: but no such thing. After an hour's absence he returned, dressed for the evening, wondered that I had not ordered tea, and said he was going for an hour to the opera, and then to the club; saying which, he kissed my hand, and hurried off, leaving me no less surprised than mortified at being thus deserted. Does not this first *triste* evening in my new abode seem ominous? I will endeavour not to entertain the apprehension.

Over the chimney-pièce in the library in which I was seated, I observed the portrait of a lady, so beautiful, yet with such a melancholy countenance, that it increased the sadness I already endured. I felt sure it must be that of his wife—of her who was my predecessor here. He had not once looked at it on entering. How heartless! This portrait reminded me that he was a father; and its sweet, mournful expression occasioned me to experience a deep interest with regard to her child.

“She, too,” thought I, “has been here neglected, and, like me, abandoned to solitude. She, perhaps, loved him, and wept in agony the neglect that pains me so little: she was, therefore, more wretched.” And again I looked at that beautiful face, the eyes of which seemed to return my glance with mild pensiveness. There are some hearts in which the germ of melancholy is implanted

even from their earliest youth, and maturity only strengthens it. On such persons, the inevitable ills of life fall with a weight that, if it crush them not wholly, leaves them eternally bruised in spirit. Such a spirit was hers on whose resemblance I gazed with an interest that no portrait ever before excited in me. Every thing in that pale, lovely face announces it. Yes; I will be kind to her child; that sweet, appealing look pleads not in vain.

I experience a strange feeling in this house, as though I were an intruder; whichever way I turn, I see around me all the indication that I have taken another's place. The house was fitted up to receive Lady Annandale as a bride; her cipher, intermingled with flowers and gold arabesques, ornaments all the furniture in the apartments appropriated to me, the gloss scarcely off them; and she—in her grave, and I—in her place. And yet the

separation caused by death appears to me less terrible than the moral divorce of two hearts that ought to love, but cannot sympathise. She on whose portrait I gaze is not more separated from him than I am. An inseparable barrier, that of indifference, divides us, but *he* heeds it not: the heart is a possession he seeks not to acquire. There is a picture of her in every room. He must have loved, or have fancied that he loved her: yet now *he* seems to think of her no more than if she had never existed, while *I* can think of nothing else. How can we forget those dear to us, and lost? Methinks that,

From out the grave of every friend we loved
Springs up a flower (as fabulists relate,
Arose from the red stream of Ajax's wound);
Memory 'tis named; and, watered by our tears,
It lives and grows, until its fibres strike
Into the heart, nor leave it until death.

No; I was mistaken when I said he must have loved her. There is an indelicacy and insensibility in this parade of all the memorials of his first wife, that prove he could never have loved *either* of us. If *I* loved him, I could not bear all these mementos of another; and, even as it is, when he stoops to kiss my brow, I find myself unconsciously looking at her picture, as if I expected it would betray some symptom of dissatisfaction. When he returned home, which was not until four o'clock in the morning, he hardly apologised, either for the length of his absence, or the unseasonableness of his return.

He was, as he always is, in high spirits; (how I dislike a person that is *always* in high spirits!) seemed elated by his encounter with his different friends, and talked of the parties he had arranged for me; an endless succession, it would appear, of dinners, balls, and

soirées. I asked, where was his child? and he said, —

“ Oh, by the by, I quite forgot poor little St. Aubyn. He is at Richmond, for he has been ailing — cutting his teeth, or afflicted by some other of the endless maladies to which children are subject.”

And this man is a father! I will go to Richmond to-morrow, and see this poor child, who shall not, while I live, want a mother. I already love, because I pity it; and shall derive from it more pleasure than from all the gaieties which its parent has promised to obtain for me.

Ever your affectionate

AUGUSTA.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

INDEED you are to blame, dear Augusta, in thus giving way to depression, and expecting from Lord Annandale a sensibility that few men ever retained after twenty-five ; and none, even to that period, who have made society and its artificial enjoyments the principal object of life. There has been no deception on his part ; he shewed himself, from the beginning, in his true colours ; one of those who like, and are liked by, the world, as they style that small portion of it which is comprised in the fashionable circle of the metropolis. The *succès de société* is the utmost extent of his ambition ; he has acquired it himself, at the expense of the more solid and sterling qualities, which a contact with the world is so calculated to injure,

if not destroy ; and he now, doubtless, wishes to secure it for you. He captivated your youthful mind by his descriptions of that society in which you are now called to enact a part ; and you are unreasonable in expecting that he will abandon the habits which he has indulged for years, ignorant, as he probably is, that you disapprove of them.

A romantic mind, to sympathise with yours, you must not expect to find in Lord Annandale ; but a kind, good-tempered, and cheerful companion, you may calculate upon, and must be content with. This is more than falls to the lot of all ; for remember that happiness consists, not in having much, but in being content with little. Greatly as I contemn artifice, there is sometimes a necessity of adopting it in married life. I refer to, perhaps, the only occasion where it is innocent, which is, that of not appearing conscious of a hus-

band's faults. As long as he believes they are not discovered, his vanity, if no better feeling influence him, will induce his studious concealment of them, which is the first step towards their amendment: but, when once he knows they are exposed, he becomes reckless and callous.

Heaven forbid, my dear Augusta, that I should have any doubts of your conduct being always what it ought to be; what I dread in you is a disregard of appearances — a neglect of the *shadow* of goodness, while you are satisfied with possessing the *substance*. This is what is most to be dreaded; for all very young women, too early thrown into the vortex of the artificial stream of fashion in which so many reputations, if not virtues, have been engulfed. Invaluable as is the honour of a woman, be assured the possession cannot console her for the loss of its reputation, — a loss to which her own

heedless inexperience, or levity, continually conduces, and which leaves her, through the remainder of her life, a target for the arrows of the censorious.

I learn, with regret, that Miss Montessor is to take up her abode with you this season. Beware of following her counsel, or letting her introduce into your home circle any of the persons with whom she associated while on the Continent; of many of whom report speaks most injuriously. You know how I dread giving credence to, or repeating scandal, but I cannot reconcile it with my sense of duty towards you, to conceal the real character of this unworthy person, whom I sincerely wish you had never known, as she is the last woman I should wish to see installed beneath your roof.* Let no

* Here follows a statement similar to the one made by Lord Delaward to Lord Nottingham, which, to avoid repetition, we have suppressed.

human being know that your husband is not an object of your strongest attachment; for, *that* once known, you will become an object of speculation and distrust to those who, judging of all women by a few of the worst specimens of the sex, conclude, that she who loves not her husband, either loves, or is ready to love, some one else.

Avoid intimacies, either male or female, except with persons whose reputations are calculated to add lustre to yours, for much evil is often occasioned by a contrary conduct. All the faults attributed to a woman in society are supposed to be known, and shared, by the females of the *clique* in which she lives, and, if they have ever been suspected of indiscretion, she shares in the censure. The *habitués* of a house give the colour to the reputation of its mistress. The men are invariably supposed,

by the good-natured world, to be more than mere acquaintances; and the women, *confidentes*. It is by such imprudent habits of familiarity that many a woman has lost her reputation, while her virtue has remained unimpaired.

Your excellent parents are well, and as cheerful as our united attention can make them; but they pine for you, and intend soon joining you in London. Lord Nottingham leaves us to-morrow; he is a very agreeable companion, possesses a highly cultivated mind, and great warmth of heart. He is one of the few with whom I would consent to share my husband's friendship. His attention to your father and mother has been unremitting; and they have formed a strong attachment to him.

Write to me often, dearest Augusta; tell

all you think and feel, to one who, if she sometimes chides you like an elder sister, always feels the love of one.

M. DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

DEAREST MARY,—I kept my resolution ; and, in defiance of Lord Annandale's representations of the unreasonableness of the measure, I proceeded to Richmond, the day after my arrival in London. My perseverance in this scheme at first discomposed him, for he had, as he asserted, made engagements for me ; but at length he yielded, and, to my dismay, said something about his considering my impatience to see his child as a flattering proof of my affection for its father. I blushed, from con-

sciousness of how unmerited was this eulogium, for so he evidently meant it to be ; and, as a reward for my supposed tenderness, he offered to accompany me to Richmond, as if it were a sacrifice on his part, having, as he declared, a thousand things to do.

On arriving at a little damp-looking cottage, overgrown with ivy, situated in a rural lane at Richmond, we found the nurse absent ; and the poor child I came to see, consigned to an untidy slip-shod girl of fifteen, who was endeavouring to pacify it, by jingling a bunch of keys, and singing, or rather screaming a tune. The nurse, she said, had gone out with a friend, only five minutes before.

“ No ! she be gone out ever so long ago,” exclaimed a dirty child, of about six years old, who was torturing an unfortunate kitten ; “ mammy went ever so long ago, with that cross man who eats half our dinner.”

“ Hold your tongue, Bessy,” ejaculated the elder, “ and don’t speak till you ’re spoken to ;” an advice that appeared by no means to gratify her to whom it was addressed.

Never had I beheld any thing offering such a disgusting picture of uncleanness and discomfort as this abode ; and its inhabitants were in perfect keeping with it.

The poor dear little boy was attired in a low-priced cotton dress, positively dirty ; with a soiled and tattered lace cap, the remnant of former elegance, on his head ; the face, pale and rigid, indicating that incipient disease had already assailed him : and his cries, or rather moans, were most painful to hear.

Lord Annandale was shocked.

“ This is very dreadful !” said he ; “ would you believe it, Augusta, I thought, until we came here, that this poor little fellow was in a most comfortable residence, which this was

described to me to be ; and for which, my steward told me, a large rent was paid. And see how the poor little wretched boy is clad — positively like a beggar's child ; notwithstanding this abominable nurse sends such bills for his wardrobe !”

I ordered some water to be made warm, and inquired for clean clothes, to dress the child.

“ They be mostly all at the wash,” replied the elder girl, opening a drawer, from which she drew forth two nearly worn-out frocks and caps.

“ No, they be'nt at the wash,” said the incorrigible younger girl ; “ mammy took 'em all with her to Lon'on to sell ; the cross man made her.”

“ It's no such a thing !” exclaimed the elder, looking much embarrassed ; “ they're all at the wash.”

I took the poor and much neglected child, and, having performed the necessary and long-disused ablutions, dressed it as well as I could, this being my first attempt at any operation of the kind. Then, having sent one of the footmen for some Naples biscuits and milk, I succeeded in making a little panada, which the poor little fellow eagerly devoured. Wrapt in my shawl, and sleeping nearly all the time on my bosom, I brought the dear infant to London; and, when he opened his eyes, I was repaid, amply repaid, by a smile, and the quiescence with which I was permitted to kiss its pale mouth.

Lord Annandale, although shocked at the scene we had witnessed, appeared to forget his own share in the culpable neglect of his child, in the anger he betrayed against its wicked nurse. He fancied, that, in allowing an unlimited sum for the support of his offspring, he

was doing all that was required ; never recollecting, that his profuseness encouraged the cupidity of the designing impostor to whom he confided it ; and who, charging for luxuries the child never had, denied it the common comforts necessary for its preservation.

“ You are very good to that poor little animal,” said Lord Annandale, (how the word grated on my ears!) “ but pray don't kiss it until it is purified from the disgusting atmosphere it has so lately left.”

“ I feel no disgust towards the dear infant,” answered I, coldly.

“ Ay, that may be, but I do ; and I don't wish to fancy your red lips and fair cheeks associated in any way with the impurities from which we snatched him.”

I cannot tell you, Mary, how the gross selfishness of this speech shocked me.

I have had the nursery rendered as comfort-

able as possible ; have secured a steady, respectable woman as nurse, and bought a wardrobe for my little *protégé*. Already he begins to look quite a different being ; and the doctor I have consulted for him says, the delicacy of his health arose only from neglect. How dreadful a subject for reflection ! and yet, his father seems unconscious of his most culpable share in what might, and, as the doctor says, would have occasioned his child's death.

The dear little fellow knows me perfectly, evinces his joy when he sees me, by cooing, and holding out his tiny hands ; and nestles his head in my bosom when they want to remove him from me. *I* can now look with less sadness on his dead mother's portrait ; and I could almost fancy *it* also looked less sad. It is soothing to have something to love, some creature that depends on one for its happiness. This helpless innocent almost reconciles me to

a destiny that will henceforth serve to render his less forlorn, and even a reflected happiness is not to be undervalued. I have been spoiled at home—home! dear and sacred name; how many fond associations does it recall! Not only did I form the source whence all the felicity of my dear father and mother flowed, but they, every hour, every moment, made me sensible of this gratifying fact. Here I am lost, confounded with the crowd, hardly sensible of my own identity, now that it seems so little essential to the enjoyment of those around me. Lord Annandale's habits and pursuits have all been so long formed, and without reference to me, that I seem in no degree necessary to the routine of his pleasures. Political and social avocations fill up so much of his time, as to leave little of it for domestic enjoyments, had he a taste for such, which I know is not the case. The feverish existence, so generally pur-

sued here, is destructive to happiness. Married people are rendered so wholly independent of each other for society and companionship, that it is not to be wondered at, if they often forget the ties which bind, without attaching them. A man of fashion, I really believe, marries merely because a well-born and well-bred woman is considered a necessary appendage to his establishment, to do the honours of his house, and assist him in adding to its splendour. But a belief that his happiness depends on her, no more enters into his head, than if she stood in no near and dear relation to him. She is not the confident of his secret thoughts, the soother of his troubles, or the sweetener of his hearth. No! she is an eligible person to share his dignities, and help to sustain them. She wears his family jewels, sits at the head of his table, gives him an heir to his honours, is polite and courteous to him and his friends,—and he is,

satisfied. Whether *she* is, or is not, he never pauses to inquire. Nay, more, he would treat any indication of discontent as proof of a very unreasonable *exigeance*. What does she, what can she, require? Has she not a brilliant position? This is the first essential in the catalogue of necessaries for happiness, in the estimation of the world in general, and of the male part of it in particular. Yet who, with a sensitive heart or elevated mind, ever attained felicity in it, unaided by the domestic affections? As well might it be supposed, that, because a woman is sparkling in diamonds of an inestimable price, she is happy. The brilliant position, like the glitter of the diamonds, is only seen by others; the owner beholds not the lustre, though she is conscious of the weight. Has she not wealth to furnish every object that taste or fancy can desire, or luxury suggest? True; but did wealth ever

yet yield happiness, unless he with whom it is shared gave zest to its enjoyment? As well offer gold instead of bread to a starving wretch in a wilderness, as imagine that riches can satisfy a heart pining for affection and sympathy. If I know myself, I think that, had I found my husband's happiness depended at all on me, I should have silenced the murmurs of my own heart to administer peace to his; but as it is — yet will I not despair, yes, I will cling to this new, this helpless object, that has none else but me to protect or cherish him, and endeavour to forget, in his welfare, the selfish regrets of a disappointed spirit. How happy are you, dearest Mary, in having found a partner for life whose purest source of enjoyment you constitute, and to whom your perpetual presence and soothing attentions are too necessary not to render even a temporary deprivation of them felt as a misfortune difficult

to be borne, and their restoration impatiently desired!

Alas! I fear I must pray not to become your envious, instead of being, as now, your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA ANNANDALE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO THE MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

ME voici, chère amie, in London, that imagined *El dorado* of spinsters; where rich bachelors float on the surface of society, as fish do in rivers, to be caught by those who know how to lure them. But, though they frequently rise to the bait, and nibble sometimes, yet are they rarely hooked. Whether their escape proceeds from their wariness, or the unskil-

fulness of the angler, I have not yet had time to ascertain; but I mean to make the experiment, and you shall hear the result. I more than once feared, that, after all, I should not come here; *madame ma tante* had so many scruples to be vanquished, and was so little disposed to yield any of them to my reasoning powers, of which, *entre nous*, she appears to entertain no very exalted opinion. I console myself for her humiliating depreciation of me, by the recollection, that in proportion to the obtuseness of the mind acted upon, is the want of perception of the ability, of the agency, brought to bear against it. It is thus that our vanity offers a salve to the wounds inflicted on it. My aunt thought, forsooth, that Lady Annandale was too young to be a prudent chaperon for me. I ventured to suggest that I was old enough to be a prudent chaperon for her. This retort only produced a portentous shake

of the head, and a, — “ I fear, Caroline, you have adopted habits and sentiments on the Continent totally at variance with our English notions of propriety; notions that render you a very unfit friend for one who ought to be wholly, purely English.”

“ But, *ma chère tante* ——”

“ Call me aunt, in good plain English, Caroline; for your French aunts seem to me to be very like comedy aunts, only brought on the stage to be duped or ridiculed, or both.”

“ Well, my dear aunt, in sober, sad English, why should you suppose that the feelings and notions on the Continent are at variance with those of England?”

“ Because I have seen and heard of conduct in foreigners that I consider most objectionable; yet which, amongst them, excited no censure.”

“ That is to say, aunt, you heard no ill-

natured animadversions on it. The tale was not whispered in every society, with all the exaggerations that malice can lend, until nearly the whole story was changed, as would have been the case in England."

"Caroline, your depreciation of your own country is neither honourable to your judgment nor to your patriotism."

"And have you seen or heard of no conduct in English people that you considered most reprehensible?"

"Examples of such may exist, I grant; but they never fail to excite universal censure."

"Granted, my dear aunt; for the English are a very censorious nation. They love scandal as people do snuff: it excites them: but, when they have winked away, and whispered, and read away, in the scandal-vending papers, the reputations of half, if not all their friends, do they break off from them, and leave them

alone, not in their glory, but in their notoriety? No such thing. They discover that poor Lady C—— had a very foolish husband, who never looked sufficiently strictly after her; and, therefore, she was more to be pitied than blamed for that *disagreeable affair*: this same said Lady C—— having a generous, confiding husband, who, believing in her protestations of affection for him, never dreamed of her liking another, until her guilt was made universally known. He is generally censured: ‘he ought to have suspected,’ — ‘he must have known,’ — ‘he was greatly to blame,’ say all the world. And for what? that he loved, and trusted his wife. Then Lady D——, how deplorable her fate! With such a jealous, suspicious husband, was it to be wondered at that the poor, dear soul fell into that sad scrape? Lord D—— was wholly in fault. If men will be so jealous, suspicious, and severe, they must put up with the

consequences. Lord D—— is universally censured because he *did* look after his wife, yet could not save her; and this is the justice of society. Lady E——, whose bad conduct admits of no doubt, is found to be a most injured woman, because her husband is suspected of having liked Lady F——; as if an error in the husband's conduct could excuse that of the wife! The English can no more dispense with the scandalous papers on the Sabbath, than they can with going to church. One is, perhaps, considered a fit preparation for the other; for, as we are commanded to pray for all sinners, it is as well to know them, and their whereabouts, *en detail.*”

“Caroline, Caroline, this is a very improper mode of talking.”

“A very improper mode of acting, I think you ought to say, my dear aunt. Now, on the Continent, there are no scandalous papers;

no trials in the courts of law, to offer a *bonus* to the malice of discharged domestics, or to enable husbands to put into their purses the valuation affixed to the honour of their wives. Scandal is not there considered a necessary stimulant to the daily food, and almost as indispensable; the consequence of which is, that, if there exists as much immorality on the Continent, the proofs of it, with all the disgusting details, are not obtruded, to shock the old, and corrupt the young. And this, surely, is an advantage gained."

"I deny it, Caroline. As well might you assert, that, if a contagious disease is making its ravages unseen and unsuspected, it is less dangerous to a community, than when it is made known, and people are warned to avoid it."

"Then you, aunt, approve the trials to which I refer?"

“ I must always, on general principles, approve a salutary severity, while I deplore its necessity. If an incurable gangrene attack a limb, I should advise its amputation : on the same system I should counsel a similar treatment of those members of the moral body, that I sanctioned in the physical one.”

“ Then you approve the odious exposures of conjugal infidelity ?”

“ The trials that too frequently occur in England, and on which you, Caroline, have commented with a degree of freedom and flippancy habitual only to women who have lived long out of this country, have one great moral effect which those who take a superficial view of the subject may overlook. I refer to the publicity and revolting details that accompany them; which are so appalling, that it is easy to believe, that the terror they inspire may have served to deter many a woman from conduct

that might lead to such a result. A sense of shame is so inherent in the female heart, in which Providence, for its own wise purposes, has implanted it, that it often operates in enabling women successfully to combat and overcome a passion that might have triumphed over virtue. You may remember it is recorded that when suicides became so frequent among our sex, that numbers were every day committed, the only effectual mode found for arresting them, was by the enactment of a law, decreeing, that the persons of all women guilty of this fearful crime were to be publicly exposed. The sense of modesty and shame, stronger than the fear of death in woman's heart, stopped the mania. Are not the trials you alluded to, Caroline, a more shocking exposure? and may we not believe them to be an equally salutary preventive of crime?"

“ But do you not think, aunt, that a hus-

band ought to shew some lenity to his wife, though she may have erred ?”

“ Why, surely, you could not expect a man of honour to sit tamely down with a wife who had violated hers? By so doing, he would become the tacit sanctioner of her guilt, and permit her pernicious example to sully the morals of his children.”

“ Will the exposure of her crime, with all its loathsome details, serve to preserve their morals, aunt ?”

“ Guilt *punished* is always less dangerous, as an example, than guilt tolerated.”

“ Casuists might pronounce otherwise, aunt.”

“ I am no casuist, and wish you were less of one. But I repeat, that you have imbibed most erroneous opinions—all that you have now been stating is so wholly in contradic-

tion to English feelings and notions, that I must again assert, that I consider you a very ineligible companion for so young and inexperienced a person as Lady Annandale."

I give you this stupid dialogue between my aunt and me, that you may enter into some of the peculiar characteristics of the English ; one of which is, to believe themselves the most moral people in the world, while society teems with scandalous anecdotes, which, if only a quarter of them are true, would prove some portion of the upper classes to be the *least* moral in the world. Mr. So-and-So is openly talked of as the lover of Lady So-and-So, and invited wherever she visits. Many mothers would not hesitate to let her chaperon their daughters, and, if spoken to on the subject, would answer,—“ Oh, yes, it is perfectly true ; people do say very shocking things

about poor Lady So-and-So ; but everybody receives her, and she gives *such* pleasant parties, and is such a *nice* person."

My dear compatriots are content to display their pretensions to morality, by censuring all who depart from its rules, rather than by an adherence to those rules themselves. And, having censured, they, like good mothers, receive back to their bosoms the children they have whipped, but not amended. Enough, however, of the English, *en masse*, for the present.

Now, for my friend Lady Annandale, who is the strangest person imaginable. Only fancy, she has taken it into her eccentric little head to conceive quite a passion for a pale sickly child of her husband's, eighteen months old ; and as disagreeable as all children are at that age. *Le mari, pauvre homme*, seems quite flattered, though not a little *embêté*, by this caprice of his wife's ; which, with the usual vanity

peculiar to his sex, he attributes to her affection for him. She spends whole hours playing with and caressing this unhealthy little thing, and never seems so happy as when in its company. The evening I arrived, I found a chosen few of the *élite* of Annandale's friends were to dine here ; but, judge of my agreeable surprise, when I saw the *comtesse, notre comtesse*, of Hohenlinden, enter. I had not written to apprise her of my intention of coming, so that she was as much surprised at the *rencontre* as I was. It was the first time of her seeing Lady Annandale ; and she positively stood immovable for a minute, so much was she struck by her extraordinary loveliness. If I can judge by the human countenance of what is passing within, I should say she was more astonished than delighted at the blaze of beauty that broke upon her ; though she quickly recovered her *presence d'esprit*, and,

embracing Lady Annandale *à la Française*, said she hoped that, as an old friend of Lord Annandale, and a still older friend of *la chérie* Caroline *Mon Tresor*, as she always calls me, *la belle* Lady Annandale would not consider her a stranger. The glance—half menace, half reproach—which *sa seigneurie* bestowed on Annandale, when she thought herself unobserved, unfolded their whole position, past and present, to me, as fully as if it had all been written in legible characters: and it was comical to see him, in order to conciliate *la comtesse*, looking as compunctious as possible for having wedded a lovely woman.

It strikes me that Lady Annandale is more beautiful than ever, and I can already perceive that she creates a wonderful sensation here. I can also perceive that *madame la comtesse* has been the love of Annandale, who has per-

suaded her, I'll be sworn, that his marriage was one of *convenance* ; and she, who has vanity enough to believe all that administers to its gratification, has taken his statement *au pied de la lettre*. I fancy her saying to her friends, “ *ce pauvre cher Annandale: il m'adore toujours, mais il est forcé de se marier, pauvre homme! Comme cela doit le chagriner! elle n'est pas du tout jolie. Il m'a avoué, enfin, qu'elle est bien laide, mais très riche.*” Don't you fancy her repeating this to all her coterie—and then, the brilliant beauty of Lady Annandale breaking on her without any preparation! I would not be *milord* at the next interview for something; as *notre frau grafinn* is apt to be energetic in her demonstrations of dissatisfaction, when deceived by any of her adorers.

She has not grown younger since we saw her last; *au contraire*, she looks haggard, and

fanée; but, all that she loses in natural charms she endeavours to supply by artificial substitutes, and resembles a piece of mosaic well put together. I, rather spitefully, talked of some of her admirers at Vienna; and in that tone of badinage in which you have sometimes flattered me I excel. She looked abashed; for she has, I conclude, been persuading Annandale that he alone has ever stood high in her good graces. I can perceive that it is the fashion attached to her position, and not her charms, which has won his homage; but this is not a rare occurrence here, Englishmen being more vain of the preference of a *dame à la mode*, however plain, than of that of the most perfect beauty who is not *en vogue*. What a contrast is there between the young and blooming Augusta, with her sylph-like figure, graceful movements, and

sparkling countenance, and this mature Teutonic Calypso!

La comtesse affects a *grande tendresse* for me; so I conclude that she wishes to make use of me in some way or other: we shall see, by and by. The *laissez-aller* of her manners seemed to astonish more than please Lady Annandale, who drew up with an air of offended dignity, very like that usually resorted to, on similar occasions, by her prudish friend, Lady Delaward. *Notre frau grafinn* was, however, quite insensible to this assumption of matronly decorum;—she regards as little as ever the opinions which others may entertain respecting her. I think, that to this open and contemptuous indifference as to whether she conciliates their esteem, or respects their prejudices, she owes her popularity with my compatriots; who are, in gene-

ral, prone to yield their suffrages to those candidates who appear the least eager to obtain them. Of that unreformed borough, "good society," the most effective members are often those who are most independent of the electors. *La comtesse* is, consequently, at the head of the most fashionable, if not reputable, circle. Pleasure is the order of the day, which they enter into, here, with a business-like sort of perseverance in the pursuit, that proves they have indefatigable energies, if not wisdom. Amusement (as our social efforts to repel the enemy *ennui* are conventionally denominated), which on the Continent is partaken of gaily and airily, is here a very serious affair; and laboriously occupies the attention of those who, in place of abandoning themselves to it with the cheerfulness of foreigners, pursue it, much as sportsmen do a fox, with no little risk, and still less enjoyment.

But, on all these subjects, I shall soon be able to make you *au fait*, as I intend to study them, *con amore*, and give you the benefit of my observation. Adieu, *chère amie* ; dites mille choses pour moi au marquis.

Votre CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

I LEFT the Delawards with regret, and arrived here, three days ago. I found all London, by which I mean the clubs and society, raving of the beauty of Lady Annandale, *qui fait fureur*. I attended the drawing-room yesterday, and saw her presented. Every eye was upon her, and every tongue loud in her praise ; that is, every male tongue ; for the ladies wondered what induced people to make such a fuss about her — *they* saw nothing

so very wonderful in her. Miss Montessor was also presented; and, had she not been near Lady Annandale, would have been admired, for she looked extremely well. To the generality of persons she must appear a very handsome woman. Her figure is graceful and symmetrical, and her features peculiarly regular and *distingué*: but the expression of her countenance is to me extremely disagreeable; for it has that hardness which belongs exclusively to persons whose thoughts have never risen above the passions and feelings of the worldly minded and calculating; a character quite the reverse of what I like to see in a female face. Miss Montessor seems perfectly aware of the value of all the advantages she possesses in her present position, and determined to avail herself to the utmost of them. She affects to treat Lady Annandale as a spoiled child over whom she has unbounded influence, and

Annandale, as a chosen friend. From the good understanding that seems to subsist between Lady Annandale and her, I conclude that she has contrived to exculpate herself from the charge made against her honour. To effect this was easy, with so unexperienced a person as Lady Annandale, who would be likely to redouble her kindness towards her, if led to believe her unjustly accused. Her intimacy with the Comtesse Hohenlinden offers an excuse for drawing that lady perpetually to Lady Annandale's, whom she votes her *amie de cœur*, a title to which Annandale is much better entitled.

Last night there was a brilliant reception at Delafield House; and again, Lady Annandale shone the brightest star of the evening. I had no idea of the beauty of this lovely creature until I saw her on this occasion; for, in the country, during the three days I passed be-

neath the same roof with her, she was so *triste* and abstracted, her eyes so dimmed by tears, and her cheeks so pale, that, though I was conscious that she was beautiful in spite of all these counteracting circumstances, still I was not prepared for the blaze of loveliness which she presented on the evening to which I am now referring.

She displays a degree of kindness, indeed I might say cordiality, towards me, that is very agreeable, and would be extremely flattering if I could attribute even a portion of it to any implied sense of my own merit; but I know I owe it to the favourable opinion the Delawards are so kind as to entertain of me, and the good-natured commendations of Lord and Lady Vernon, who overrate the attention I paid them in the country. Anandale has solicited me to conduct his wife through the routs and *soirées* when we meet,

while he divides his attentions between the Comtesse Hohenlinden, and Miss Montessor. He is elated at the sensation Lady Annandale has created ; and more than ever a slave to that artificial world, to which the possession of a treasure such as that he owns ought to render him utterly indifferent.

I was interrupted yesterday before I had time to finish this dull epistle ; and now resume my pen to add a few lines. I dined yesterday at Annandale's, with only a few persons of *haut ton* ; consisting of ladies whose reputation are more fashionable than respectable, and of men whose morality is of that stamp which renders them the last persons a sensible person would select as his guests at a table where so young and lovely a woman presided. The Comtesse Hohenlinden came in the evening, followed by some of her adorers, whose attentions to her were marked rather

by warmth than respect. Her demoralising example seems to have withdrawn all reserve from the ladies who form her coterie, for each was occupied exclusively by the favourite beau of the season. In short, "lovers were all they ought to be, and husbands not the least alarmed." Lady Annandale was the only woman in the room ignorant of the exact relative positions of all the parties; but Miss Montessor penetrated the whole at a glance, as I could perceive by the significant looks she exchanged with the comtesse.

Already has Lady Annandale become the object of marked attention of more than one of the young *roués* of fashion who hover round her, mingling compliments on her beauty with *piquant* anecdotes of most of the ladies present.

"Observe," said Lord Henry Mercer, "how angry Lady Harlestone looks: she is jealous

of the Comtesse Hohenlinden, with whom she has discovered Charles Fitzhardinge has been flirting during her absence at Paris."

"And what right has she to be jealous of that?" asked Lady Annandale, looking as guileless and as innocent as—she is.

This question produced a smile from Lord Henry, who answered it by saying, "Your ladyship is the only person in London, or, at least, in our circle, that could require to be informed *why*; for every one knows that Charles Fitzhardinge has been the adorer of Lady Harlestone ever since she gave George Seymour his *congé*."

"Oh! I thought Lady Harlestone was a married woman," replied Lady Annandale, with *naïveté*.

This produced more than a smile, for the two coxcombs who heard it laughed downright.

“And what does your ladyship suppose she now is?” asked Lord Henry.

“A widow, of course,” was the answer.

This gave rise to another laugh, and Lady Annandale appeared embarrassed. I changed the subject, and engaged her in a conversation relative to the Delawards, and her father and mother — two themes that never fail to interest her sufficiently to withdraw her attention from all others; and the two *beaux* walked away, voting, I dare be sworn, Lady Annandale a fool, or, at least, not far removed from that condition. I saw them go to the Comtesse Hohenlinden; and, from her laughter, and the looks cast at Lady Annandale, they were, I am sure, relating to her the simplicity, or, as they would most probably term it, the *bêtise, de la beauté*.

The comtesse, with that vanity and spirit of coquetry which characterise her, appears

now determined to exhibit Annandale as being more than ever the slave of her charms. She thinks that this is the only way of proving their power to the world ; and she goes about hanging on his arm, and positively affecting to display the *tendresse* she *affiche* him to entertain for her. His vanity is quite equal to hers ; and, to have the credit of making her dismiss one or two of the pretenders to her favour, he is capable of compromising himself, and behaving *ill* to Lady Annandale. Already he presumes to treat her with a *nonchalance* which, if it does not amount to ill-breeding, is, at least, far removed from that respectful attention which every man owes to his wife ; and, short as has been their *séjour* in town, people already begin to comment on his being what they call “ *so fashionable* ” a husband.

An observation of Lady Annandale had

so much innocence in it, that I was glad no one heard it but myself, conscious as I am of the evil interpretations to which it would subject her.

“ I scarcely know the persons around me,” said she. “ How happy they all seem, and how deeply occupied with each other ! It is pleasant to see married people so much attached ; though, I confess, I prefer witnessing that delicate and respectful attention which distinguishes Lord Delaward’s manner towards his wife, to the familiarity, affectionate as it appears, of the gentlemen around us, to theirs. And yet it surprises me, too ; for Lord Annandale told me, that in society it was not customary for men to sit by their wives, or to walk about with them, but the persons around us never quit each other.”

If this innocent speech were promulgated, Lady Annandale would be ridiculed by every

man and woman of fashion, and set down as a perfect *imbécile*: you would judge differently, as does your friend,

NOTTINGHAM.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
MISS MONTRESSOR.

You ask me for news, *chère* Caroline, but you forget that news, like money, is not always forthcoming when demanded. Have you never observed how blank people look when either is required of them? Such is now my case, as yonder mirror, on which my eyes have just glanced, *par hasard*, assured me. *Voyons!* what shall I tell you? Conspiracies are so common, that they cease to interest any but the plotters, the plotted against, and the police; changes of ministry few care about, except *les agents de change*; *et quant aux modes*, Herbault tells

me, they arrive in London three days after they see the light here.

En vérité, I know nothing worthy of repetition, unless it be an occurrence which has recently excited the attention of all the *salons* in Paris. People talk of nothing else, and half-a-dozen versions, at least, are given of it. It is rather a long affair; but, as it has its points of interest, I think I will undertake its narration, and endeavour to serve it up to you in the regular "*Contes Moraux*" style.

You did not, I believe, know Monsieur and Madame de St. Armand. Yet you must have seen them, too, as they visited at some of the houses of our acquaintance, and the heroine of the *histoire* was too handsome not to be remarked. But, to my story. Once upon a time, then, the said Monsieur et Madame de St. Armand were considered a juvenile Baucis and Philemon, and were cited by all who

knew them as one of the happiest couples in Paris. Their affection, and the good understanding subsisting between them, were invariably quoted as examples in every *ménage*; (what a pity, *par parenthèse*, it is, that people are more prone to quote good examples, than to follow them! *n'est-ce pas?*)! and though Jules de St. Armand's uxoriousness, and deference to his wife's opinions, were sometimes ridiculed by the Benedicts of his circle, or the *garçons* who boasted their freedom from female influence, still it seemed generally allowed that he was as happy as even the most attached of his friends could desire him to be.

Jules and Alicia de St. Armand had been married two years at the period to which I am now referring. Their union had arisen solely in affection, and the time which had elapsed since its occurrence had only served to increase their mutual attachment. To great

personal beauty, both joined considerable talents; consequently, they were eminently calculated to shine in the *réunions* of the circle to which they belonged; but they found themselves so happy in the home which their love embellished, that they scarcely ever voluntarily entered into society.

Every husband who thought his wife too fond of balls and *soirées*, dwelt, with warm commendations, upon the domestic taste and habits of Madame de St. Armand; and every wife who felt dissatisfied with the dissipation of her *caro sposo*, quoted M. de St. Armand as a model for husbands. The natural consequences ensued. The wives with propensities to gaiety began to look with aversion on Alicia; and those husbands who liked all other places better than home quickly conceived an unfriendly sentiment towards Jules. This antipathy, however, might have been as

transitory as it was sudden, had it not been increased and established by the imprudent and enthusiastic praises of the friends and relatives of the exemplary couple.

And now, more than one married *belle*, who was to be seen continually at all public places, and rarely *chez elle*, was heard to observe, that it was quite ridiculous in Madame de St. Armand to set herself up to be wiser and happier than her neighbours; and that such an attempt could only be made in the peevish vanity of seeking to oppose and displease all her friends and acquaintance. Several of the men, too, who found more attractions in other women than in their own wives, spoke with affected contempt of St. Armand's hypocritical assumption of the *rôle* of a pattern husband, and of his ostentatious abandonment of society to act *le bon mari* at home. To pretend to be *better* than one's

acquaintance, is always considered as a piece of impertinence that demands correction ; but to pretend to be *happier*, is an offence never pardoned. *Mari et femme* were viewed as thus offending, and those who so considered them determined on avenging themselves.

Little did the St. Armands imagine that, while they were enjoying the pure happiness which congenial minds experience in a domestic life, their tranquil felicity and retired habits were exciting the hatred of those whom they had never injured. Had this fact been communicated to them, they would have disbelieved it ; for both were unacquainted with the ill-nature of worldly minds, and the wanton and atrocious calumnies which the spirit of rancour engenders.

The rarity of Madame de St. Armand's appearance in society rendered her beauty still more impressive whenever she was seen ;

and even women who were, perhaps, really lovelier, ceased to attract their wonted degree of admiration when she was present; solely because the beholders were habituated to *their* charms, while *hers* were invested with all the additional grace of novelty. This success only increased the acerbity of those who were already but too well inclined to be hostile to her, and they anxiously awaited an opportunity of injuring and humiliating her.

At this period a ball was given by an aunt of M. de St. Armand, at which she insisted that my conjugal and exemplary pair should attend. Aware of this circumstance, some of the most mischievous of their acquaintance hoped to profit by it, and to arrange a plot which would occasion them dissension and mortification.

A M. de Melfort had been an unsuccessful suitor for the hand of Alicia St. Armand, the

year previously to her union with Jules; and had felt so much grieved by her rejection of him, that he fled to Italy, whence he only returned a few days prior to the celebration of the memorable ball to which I have been alluding. His return had revived the recollection of his former attachment, and people wondered whether he could behold his former flame, now a wedded dame, without emotion; while others were equally anxious to learn how St. Armand would treat his wife's former admirer.

A few of the most malicious of the ladies who bore my unlucky heroine so much ill-will, were assembled in the *boudoir* of one of the *clique*, two days before the intended *fête*; when, the subject of M. de Melfort's return having been introduced, Madame de Chatannes proposed to *mystify*, as she designated her insidious project, "the affected prude;" and

another, equally spiteful, suggested the practice of a similar mystification with regard to M. de St. Armand.

Various were the plans furnished by each of the ladies, who displayed a most laudable invention and rivalry on the occasion. At length, it was agreed that Madame Fontanges, who was chosen on account of her not being an acquaintance of the St. Armands, should be the person to put the following plot into execution.

This lady was to narrowly watch my hero and heroine ; and, in case of their being separated during the ball, she was to approach close to Alicia, and, after asking an accomplice to point out to her Madame de St. Armand, to state that she experienced for her the utmost interest and pity, in consequence of her discovery of the craft and falsity of M. de St. Armand ; who, while basely pretend-

ing to only adore his unfortunate wife, was the devoted lover of an artful and most wicked person. This verbal poison was to be delivered loud enough for Alicia to hear it; and, if it should produce the anticipated effect upon her countenance, the skilful calumniator was then to pass near the husband, and observe how very embarrassed and agitated Madame de St. Armand appeared, in consequence of the presence of M. de Melfort, for whom she evidently retained all her old *tendresse*.

Can you not fancy the delight with which this malicious *clique* would concoct this amiable plan? I think I can see them revelling in all the ecstasy which the expectation of its success would occasion them; and experiencing an almost insupportable impatience to inflict a deadly wound upon the peace of two persons who had never injured them, even in thought.

Eight and forty hours elapsed, and the evening of the ball arrived. Alicia and Jules sat at their dessert; and, as the wind whistled, and the sleet beat against the windows, both wished that they were not compelled to abandon their cheerful and happy fireside to mingle in scenes which no longer possessed any attractions for them.

“ I never felt so reluctant to leave home, dearest Jules,” said Alicia, “ as I do this evening.”

“ And I, also,” he replied, “ would infinitely prefer the society of our own household gods, and your comfortable *bergères*, to my aunt’s splendid *salons*, and all her gay company. But, *hélas!* we must go; and you, dearest, must do honour to the ball by wearing your diamonds, the ornaments to which I am least partial, because they are more calculated to excite the admiration of others, than

that of a husband. Consequently, I am more than half jealous of them — as I am, indeed, of all your *grandes toilettes* ; for, in my opinion, they attract a too general attention. I like you best, Alicia, in your simple home-dress with the pink ribands (which I know are worn to please me), and when no other eye than mine can rest on your loveliness.”

“ And I, as you are well aware,” Alicia replied, “ dress only to please you, and am regardless of all other approbation.”

“ Yet, I confess,” resumed Jules, “ that, when I see you the object of general admiration, I have not philosophy enough to resist feeling proud ; though I should be less satisfied if you appeared elated by your triumph, for I should be disposed to jealousy if you were the least coquettishly inclined.”

“ No ! nothing could make me believe that you *could* be jealous, dearest,” said Alicia :

“ but I am not so confident of myself ; for I am sure that, if I saw you paying the same attention to any woman that some of the married men of our acquaintance do, I should be very miserable.”

As she thus spoke, an expression of seriousness, almost amounting to pain, stole over her beautiful face.

“ You will, then, never be miserable, dearest Alicia,” replied Jules, kissing her cheek ; “ for I am as particular in my notions of what a husband’s conduct ought to be, as I am scrupulous about a wife’s. But,” he added, as he looked at the *pendule*, “ it is time to begin to dress. Would that the ball had ended, and that we were returned, to find, as we always do, that there is nothing like home.”

You see, my dear Caroline, that I am attempting to fulfil the promise which I made in the commencement of my story ; and am

-serving up to you my *facts* in a most *fiction-like* shape. But I am not *sure* that I have *not* some talent for scribbling; and I am now, therefore, resolved to determine my surmise.

Never did Madame de St. Armand look more beautiful than on this evening; and, as I was present, I can give no dubious opinion on the subject. While she passed through the crowded suite of rooms, murmurs of approbation followed her. Her husband enjoyed the admiration she excited; and, as his aunt whispered into his ear that Alicia was the most brilliant ornament of her *salons*, he smiled a grateful assent.

The enemies of Madame de St. Armand were, of course, rendered doubly malicious by her pre-eminence; and even the unaffected modesty with which she seemed rather to shun than to court admiration, added to their hostility.

Alicia was in conversation with a lady

whom her aunt had presented to her, when she heard her own name mentioned, and Madame de Fontanges repeat the preconcerted falsehood ; every syllable of which fell on her ears as the death-knell of her happiness. She turned pale as marble, and was seized with a violent fit of trembling ; but the necessity of concealing her emotion from her companion, was still predominant in her mind. The effort, however, to repress it, exceeded her strength ; and she was almost sinking on the floor, when St. Armand approached her, and, placing her on a seat, sternly interrogated her as to the cause of her indisposition.

Never before had a word or a look verging upon severity been addressed to her by her husband ; and the alteration in his manner struck the silly girl as a sort of confirmation of the statement she had heard. Her sufferings and agitation, consequently, increased to

such a degree, that he was obliged to lead her from the ball-room, to the delight and triumph of her enemies, who had been gratified spectators of the whole scene.

When Madame de Fontanges had poured her venomous words into the ear of Madame de St. Armand, she had sought her husband ; and, turning her back towards him, repeated, as if ignorant of his vicinity, the concocted story relative to M. de Melfort's presence producing such intense agitation in Madame de St. Armand. The credulous and suspicious Jules, wounded to the heart by this imputation, though still half discrediting it, hastily sought his wife ; and found a seeming confirmation of the calumny in her pallid face and disturbed demeanour.

Her illness, which, on any other occasion, would have excited in him the liveliest interest and pity, and elicited the most tender demon-

strations of tenderness, now only produced an ungovernable rage; every symptom of which only served to corroborate, in the poisoned mind of the foolish little dupe, the truth of the statement she had heard. After a long and violent paroxysm of tears, which he witnessed with indignation, he demanded of her *whom* she had seen, and *whose* presence had had the power to create in her so violent an emotion. She replied that she had seen no one whose presence was capable of producing such an effect. This answer made him still more infuriated.

“Do you mean to affirm,” he exclaimed, with much violence, “that you have not beheld M. de Melfort?”

“Certainly not,” she rejoined, much astonished by the question.

Unhappily, however, Jules had observed the object of his wrathful interrogation leaving

the part of the *salon* in which he had found his wife ; and so near to her, that it seemed impossible that she could not have seen him. Consequently, believing that she was now deliberately uttering a falsehood, the wrath of the jealous creature became unbounded. Partially, however, repressing its indulgence, he withdrew from the ball-room : and conducted her back to the home, the late happy home, that, only two hours before, they had left with unruffled minds and loving hearts.

They scarcely spoke during their drive, for both were a prey to the most painful emotions. Alicia wept with bitterness, as the *past* returned to her memory in mournful contrast with the altered *present* ; and her tears and sobs only served to increase the anger of her excited husband. This violence prevented her from repeating to him the conversation she had overheard ; for his changed manner and

unprecedented severity seemed to confirm the fearful calumny; and she shrank from the idea of exposing her wounded feelings to one who appeared only to regard her agony with vindictive malice.

Both retired to sleepless pillows, tortured by the fiend, jealousy, which now awoke in their hearts for the first time, inflicting pangs known only to those who have fondly loved and trusted—and been betrayed.

But, I really believe, I am attempting the sentimental! And my fingers ache, and my eyes are blinded, and my head is dizzy, and I have already disfigured enough paper to fill the ambassador's bag, even if it were a sack: I must, therefore, reserve for another letter the continuation of my tale. Adieu then, *chère* Caroline, and believe me,

Votre amie dévouée,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

FROM THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
MISS MONTRESSOR.

MA CHÈRE CAROLINE,—As I have not much time or space to spare, I will resume my *conte moral* without any prelude; venturing to believe that you are under the influence of my literary spell, and are dying to learn the *dénoûment* of the narrative which, I flatter myself, I have hitherto conducted and developed with so much ability.

On the following morning, Alicia left her couch pale and suffering; her eyes swollen with tears and want of sleep, and her languid limbs scarcely able to support her exhausted frame. She hoped to find her husband more kindly disposed towards her than the night before; and determined to communicate to him the cause of the emotion which seemed to have excited his anger.

She repaired to him in the library ; but his looks revealed even an increase of sullenness, and the words of conciliation with which she had proposed to greet him, instantly died on her lips.

At this moment, a servant entered with letters for them both ; when, for the first time since their marriage, each was anxious to watch the effect which the perusal would produce upon the other. Alicia, having looked at the superscription of hers, and recognised the hand of one of her female acquaintance, laid it upon the table unopened ; and fixed her scrutinising gaze on the countenance of her husband, who seemed, however, totally regardless of her observation, so intense was the evidently painful interest which his letter had instantly excited in him. He changed colour, his eyes flashed with rage, and his livid lips trembled convulsively, as he refolded the

mysterious source of this strange and sudden paroxysm, and carefully deposited it in his pocket. Then, turning to his perplexed and agitated wife, he exclaimed, in a most angry and imperious tone,—

“ *Why* have you not read your letter? Is it that you wish to reserve its contents for the privacy of your own chamber?”

“ You, it appears,” replied Alicia, maddened by jealousy, “ could not restrain *your* impatience until an equally fitting opportunity; and the words of your correspondent, whoever *she* may be, seem to have affected you to a degree which I should once have deemed impossible.”

Jules looked at her with indignation flashing from every feature; and, snatching up her letter, sneeringly demanded whether she had any objection to his perusal of it. Alicia

promptly replied in the negative, somewhat appeased by a request which she thought would justify her in addressing a similar one to him.

He tore open the seal; but had not read ten lines, before he frantically threw the treacherous paper upon the table, and rushed wildly from her presence; leaving her both astonished and terrified by his singular conduct. In the hope of resolving her doubts, tremblingly and anxiously she seized the pernicious sheet which had produced such fatal effects, and hurriedly read the following "mystification:"

" Ma chère amie,

" We were all au désespoir at your sudden indisposition last night; but your old adorer, M. de Melfort, was still more affected

than any of us; another instance of fidelity, which again proves the truth of the old song,

‘ Qu’on revient toujours
À ses premiers amours.’

“ The poor man looked so disconsolate when you withdrew, that we were compelled in charity to do all we could to cheer him. I hope that you are better to-day; and that you will always believe in the attachment of

“ Your devoted friend,
“ MARIA L’ESTRANGE.”

This note conveyed to Madame de St. Armand the first intimation of M. de Melfort’s return to France; a circumstance, however, which was so perfectly indifferent to her, that she looked upon this announcement of it merely as a *mauvaise plaisanterie* of Madame de L’Estrange, a species of amusement in

which that lady delighted. It was, however, evident, that this foolish jest, as she supposed it to be, had offended Jules; and, gratified at the idea that he still loved her sufficiently to be jealous, she left the room to seek him, and avow all that had shocked and grieved her during the last few hours.

He was nowhere to be found; but, on the table in her boudoir, she observed a twisted billet containing a few hurried lines, stating that he should not dine at home, and would not return till very late. Poor Alicia burst into tears while she perused this frigid announcement of an absence which would endure for several hours. And *where* was he gone? Jealousy answered the question, and darted its fiery fangs to her heart, as the thought struck her, that, even in that very moment, perhaps he was with her rival, and lavishing upon her those endearing affections which had been

hitherto all her own, and were the sole base of her happiness.

She had half resolved to set forth in pursuit of him, when the recollection of her ignorance of both the person and abode of her rival arrested her. *Her rival!* what bitterness was in the thought of this hateful person! and the gentle, the hitherto reasonable Alicia, who, a few hours before, had never experienced an angry passion, now felt her very temples bursting, and her respiration impeded almost to suffocation, by jealous rage and disappointed affection.

At this moment, her *femme de charge* entered, as was her usual custom, to present the *ménu* for dinner, and receive her mistress' orders; when the agitated Madame St. Armand was obliged to quell her emotions, and assume an air of unconcern.

“ I have prepared the soup, and the *pou-*

larde au jus, for monsieur, as madame commanded yesterday," said the housekeeper; "and I think it will please him."

These few words brought a train of reflections, now fraught with bitterness, to the mind of Alicia. It was only the previous morning, that, anxious to please her husband, she had ordered his favourite *plat* for the dinner of the following day. How happy did she feel in expressing this desire! and now, though but so few hours had elapsed, what a dreadful change had occurred in her position and sentiments, and what intensity of wretchedness had she not endured in that brief interval!

She could scarcely assume sufficient composure to tell the *femme de charge* that M. St. Armand would not dine at home; and that, as she herself was rather unwell, she should only require a little *bouillon*. The expression of surprise in the woman's face awakened her

mistress to a sense of her indiscretion in avowing her indisposition at the same moment that she announced her husband's absence; and she felt embarrassed as she remarked the curiosity which she appeared to have excited.

Who has not experienced the misery of being compelled to assume an air of unconcern in the presence of importunate visitors or servants, when some painful *contretems*, which we are necessitated to conceal, has occurred? In spite of, to adopt the expression of one of your poets, "*our matchless intrepidity of face*," even you and I, *ma chère* Caroline, have, ere now, endured this vexatious species of trial with something very like discomposure, if not confusion.

Fancy, then, how such a sentimental creature as my heroine must have suffered under those circumstances; she who had never hitherto been compelled to conceal her slight-

est emotion. Yet now, while undergoing the fiercest pangs of jealousy, which shook her frame and agonised her heart, she had the additional mortification of feeling that she and her husband would become the subject of the impertinent curiosity and remarks of their own menials; a bitter and humiliating thought, before which her pride and delicacy shrank in sensitive alarm.

Do not accuse *me* of sentimentality, if I observe that it is almost incredible how painfully minor ills can make themselves felt, even in the very moment when we are enduring great and overwhelming afflictions. The power of weeping in entire secrecy, all access debarred to prying curiosity, or coarse sympathy which but aggravates the sorrow it would sooth, is in itself a source of alleviation; but the necessity of wearing the semblance of tranquillity when the heart is breaking, to elude

the vigilant eye of plebeian inquisitiveness, is alone a heavy suffering.

Remember this remark is made in my *métier* of author ; and you must not consider it as at all a representation of my own sentiments.

Every thing in the room when Alicia was seated reminded her of Jules. All that it contained were his gifts, and endeared to her by a thousand fond recollections. The book he had been reading to her the day before, while she sat at her embroidery, was still on the table, with a mark upon it, to indicate the place where he had terminated ; and the bouquet he had brought to her, was still fresh in the vase where he had placed it. As her eye rested on each object indicative of his tenderness, she asked herself, whether it was possible that he could always have been deceiving her ; and that, while he seemed to be only occupied in lavishing tokens

of affection on her, he was in reality wholly devoted to another? Her heart answered, No! Her feelings became softened by the recollection of all his delicate and incessant attentions; and she wept with much less bitterness than before, as hope whispered, that he who had hitherto so loved her, could not, in a few brief hours, be permanently and irremediably changed.

A letter was brought to her; and, for an instant, her bosom throbbed with joy, as she thought it might come from Jules, who, repenting of his severity, had written to acquaint her with his altered feelings. But, alas! the characters were not his; and, with indifference, she then unfolded the sheet.

Soon, however, its contents engrossed her liveliest attention. It was anonymous; and it stated that pity for her, and a desire of investing her with the power of reclaiming her

unfaithful husband, induced the writer to address her. The attachment of M. St. Armand for another had, the writer asserted, long been notorious to his friends, who were of opinion that his wife's ignorance on the subject stimulated him to continue his vicious course. But, were he once detected in his duplicity, repentance and shame might induce him to lead an altered life, and return to his domestic duties.

The anonymous writer added, that Mons. St. Armand was to meet the object of his affection that night, at the *bal masqué* at the Opera; and that the lady was to be dressed in a pink domino, and was to stand close to the orchestra, on the left side. At eleven o'clock, she was to hold up a bouquet, which was to be the signal, concerted between her and her lover, of her emancipation from all *espionage*, and that he was then immediately to join her.

The letter then stated, that if Madame St. Armand, disguised in a similar way, stationed herself near the appointed spot, and made the concerted signal, her husband would approach, mistaking her for the object of his passion ; when she might suffer him to conduct her to a box, and there, disclosing herself, overwhelm him with shame and contrition.

Various and violent were the conflicting feelings that shook the frame of the jealous and credulous Alicia while reading this artful concoction of the malicious junta. Could she venture to repair to such a scene of levity, and place her husband in the humiliating position the writer recommended ? No ! she would herself rather endure any agony, than adopt so daring and unfeminine a course.

But then came the reflection, that, if she disobeyed the information she had received,

her rival — her hateful, hated rival — would meet *her* husband, would hang on *his* arm, and tranquilly and happily listen to those expressions of fascinating endearment to which she alone was entitled! This thought was omnipotent; and, maddened by jealous rage, she resolved to adopt the advice of her unknown correspondent.

Her determination became confirmed, as she recollected how many times she had heard her husband censure this licentious species of amusement, and speak in terms of indignant condemnation of those females who resorted to it.

“ Yes,” thought Alicia, with bitterness, “ he may well reprobate the attendance of wives at such scenes. Their presence might be very embarrassing to husbands such as he, who, breaking through every tie of love and duty, convert the immorality they so basely

affect to loathe, into the means of sustaining their intercourse with the infamous objects of their guilty caprices. But *I*, too, will be there; and, at least, prevent him from meeting the vile woman who has corrupted him. Oh, God! that I should live to suffer this indignity!"

Her head throbbed, and her brain seemed on fire. She was incapable of reflection; for the mingled passions of love and jealousy assumed the entire dominion of her troubled mind, and silenced every incipient whisper of reason.

Do not fancy this description too highly coloured, Caroline; for "I, too, was an Arcadian,"—I once felt this, or something very like it. But it was two months, not two years, after my marriage.

She ordered her carriage, and drove to a shop that furnished masks and dominoes; and, having procured one of the latter which

was exactly similar to that described in the anonymous letter, she returned to her residence, trembling with impatience and anxiety to encounter her husband.

The letter which had produced so much impression on Jules in the morning, was also anonymous; and, under the plea of pity for his position, as an injured and deceived husband, informed him that Madame St. Armand had, the night before, promised her old lover, M. de Melfort, that she would meet him at the *bal masqué* at the Opera, provided she could elude the vigilance of her jealous husband. The writer, therefore, cautioned M. St. Armand, that, if he wished to preserve his honour, he must not leave his wife's presence the whole of that day and night; but, if he preferred to detect her in her guilt, he had only to plead an engagement abroad, and proceed to the Opera House, where he would

have ocular demonstration of her perfidy. The dress Madame St. Armand was to wear was accurately described ; but *twelve* o'clock was the hour named for her meeting with her lover.

The first impulse of the angry husband was to charge his wife with her intended assignation ; but then came the recollection, that she might as unblushingly deny this imputation, as she had, the night before, denied that of having seen M. de Melfort, though he himself had beheld him withdrawing from her presence. No ! he could no longer place reliance on her veracity ; and therefore it were fruitless to accuse her, and urge her to endeavour to establish her innocence, when her asseverations could be productive of no diminution of his suspicions.

He next resolved to watch her narrowly, during the whole day and evening, and thus

prevent her from leaving the house. But soon it occurred to him — and jealous wrath instigated the thought — that the better course would be to detect her in the moment of meeting with her lover ; and spurn her at once from his home and heart, instead of continuing to endure an endless life of uncertainty, suspicion, and misery.

The last feeling became ultimately predominant ; and, instigated by it, he left the house, and concealed himself in a *café* in the vicinity, whence he could watch his own house. No sooner, therefore, did his wife's carriage issue from the gates, than he jumped into a cabriolet, and followed in her path. He *hoped* that she was going to visit some of her relations ; though her leaving home at all, after the agitation and illness of the previous night, their mutual coldness and petulance of the

morning, and their final separation in anger, seemed a confirmation of his worst fears.

He was not long in suspense ; for her carriage shortly stopped at the door of a masquerade warehouse, where he saw her descend, her face concealed in her veil, and her person enveloped and disguised in a large mantle. So ungovernable was his rage at this apparent proof of her guilt, that he could scarcely resist his desire to enter the shop and overwhelm her with his reproaches. But, with a violent effort, he subdued the tempting impulse, and resolved —

But, *ma chère* Caroline, I do not know whether I shall ever communicate to you what he *did* resolve. Here am I toiling like an author in an attic to please you ; and I now recollect that you have never yet told me that you experience the slightest interest in my

labours. This assurance, however, I must have, ere you receive another line from

Your affectionate friend,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

P.S. To bribe you into applauding me, and into professing curiosity, even if you have not yet entertained it, I must warn you, that the best part of my tale is untold. You see I already experience an author's vanity in my vocation.

THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
MISS MONTRESSOR.

MA CHÈRE CAROLINE, — Of course, I shall believe your protestations: I find in myself such an invincible craving for your approba-

tion, that never was a person more disposed to be duped. Resolving, therefore, to be convinced that your profession of the interest which my tale deserves, and has excited, &c., is all pre-eminently sincere, I will now proceed to detail to you the catastrophe.

My last letter terminated with my announcement of Jules' formation of a resolution, which, with truly literary tact, I piquantly forbore to declare. This resolution, was to master his present temptation to an imperfect retribution; but, by postponing it, to render it more thorough and complete.

In this determination, he entered the warehouse as soon as his wife had left it; and, having provided himself with a mask and domino, such as were described in the anonymous letter, he retired to a *restaurant* in the vicinity of the Opera House; there, to await, in

trembling impatience, the moment which was to convict his wife of indelible guilt, and blight eternally his own happiness.

Every softer feeling was banished from his breast; every recollection of past tenderness only added to his rage, by compelling him to contrast his present convictions of her falsity and guilt, with his former notions of her purity and innocence. How fondly, how madly had he idolised her! and how many instances of her devoted attachment, which, only a few hours before, had they recurred to him, would have been meditated on, and cherished with transport and pride, were now only regarded by him as proofs of her skilful artifice and consummate treachery.

The envious and rantorous women who planned the savage plot which I have been detailing, scarcely hoped that it could prove successful. They feared that the timidity of Madame

St. Armand's nature would preclude her, at least, from going to the *bal masqué*, though they expected that her husband might be tempted to adopt their mischievous advice. In order, therefore, that he, at all events, might be imposed upon, they dressed the *femme de chambre* of one of the *clique* in a pink domino, and instructed her to place herself near the orchestra at the appointed hour, and give the concerted signal.

They also wrote an anonymous letter to M. de Melfort, stating that a lady, who had an important communication to make to him, desired to meet him, at eleven o'clock, at the *bal masqué*; concluding by repeating the instructions already detailed in the letter to Madame St. Armand.

The hours that intervened between the purchase of the domino and the moment for assuming their disguise, seemed interminable

to the unhappy husband and wife. A hundred times was Alicia about to abandon her intention, as the dread and indecorum of exposing herself, alone, in so vast and profligate an assembly, arose to her imagination. But, then, the idea that her absence would leave her hated rival undisputed possession of her husband, again maddened her, and determined her to execute her plan, in defiance of all the feminine misgivings which still made her shrink from the anticipation of the scene which she felt must occur.

Soon her embarrassment was excited by the thought, that her servants must be acquainted with her visit to so disreputable a place—and alone, too; she, who never went any where without her husband.

“ But what avail now,” thought the wretched Alicia, “ my fears of the condemnation of my own menials? What signifies to

me what the whole world may think, in comparison with the necessity of preventing Jules from meeting that wicked woman !”

The astonishment depicted on the countenances of her domestics, when, at half-past ten o'clock, she entered her carriage, disguised in a mask and domino, made the blush of shame mount to her very forehead, and almost induced her to abandon her resolution. But now that the servants *had* seen her in her disguise, and *had* formed their surmises and conclusions, any pusillanimous retrogradation would be even worse than fruitless. Away, therefore, with all irresolution ; and she determined to proceed in her perilous enterprise.

On arriving at the Opera House, and discovering the throng around the entrance, she became so much alarmed, that she shrank back in the carriage ; and again, for a moment, meditated a return to her home. But, growing

desperate at the thought, that in a few minutes she might be too late to prevent the meeting between her husband and the object of his guilty love, she hurriedly alighted ; and, giving the servant orders to await her return as near the spot as possible, tremblingly entered the theatre.

The lights, the music, the tumultuous rush of persons, and, above all, the noise, struck upon her terrified senses, and made her feel scarcely capable of preventing herself from sinking on the earth. Various masks accosted her with the usual hacknied addresses ; and, amused by her evident alarm, seemed peculiarly bent on persecuting her with their flip-pant attentions.

The strangeness of her position, alone in a crowd for the first time in her life, the motley throng of hideous masks, and the disguised and squeaking tones of those who wore them,

appalled her; and she shrank in painful alarm from each person who addressed her, though, in escaping from one tormentor, she only found herself assailed by another. But, in spite of her fears, one passion, painful and mighty in its influence, still supported and gave her resolution to proceed. This passion was jealousy, which steeled her nerves, and deadened all other feelings in her troubled breast.

She advanced towards the appointed spot; but, though eleven o'clock had struck, in sounds that vibrated like a death-knell in her ear, no person like the one described in her letter was visible. She repeatedly made the concerted signal with her bouquet, but in vain; she was only addressed by a crowd of masks, all utterly dissimilar in appearance to the one she sought with so much fearful interest. What if he had already joined her detested rival? there was agony and madness in the thought!

“ Why are you alone, *beau masque* ?”

“ Where is your unpunctual cavalier ?”

“ Take my arm, and do not wait for him.”

Such were the questions and phrases with which she was persecuted by the surrounding revellers ; who, marking the impatience of her gestures as she turned from them, concluded that she was in search of one who had disappointed her.

She had passed nearly an hour in this state of agonising suspense, — afraid to leave the appointed spot, lest she should miss the object of her search ; when, to her inexpressible relief, she saw a mask approaching, whose domino exactly resembled the one described in the letter, and whose air strongly reminded her of that of her husband.

She raised her bouquet, and the mask instantly advanced and offered her his arm. So great was her emotion, that she could

scarcely move ; when her companion, feeling her arm trembling within his, to a degree that indicated intense agitation, in a disguised tone expressed his sympathy, and proposed to conduct her to a box, where she might repose, until she should have regained her self-possession.

“ How unlike the tenderness of his manner to me in past happy days ! ” thought Alicia. “ No ! he cannot love the person for whom he mistakes me, or he could not be so calmly indifferent. ”

A ray of hope shot through her soul at this thought ; and she entered the box, far less wretched than when her companion had first accosted her.

I must now return to M. St. Armand, who passed *his* period of probation in a state of the most violent excitement. At a quarter to twelve he hurried to the *bal masqué* ; and

proceeded direct to the spot designated in the letter. There he saw a female in a pink domino, whose stature nearly resembled that of his wife, who gave the signal he expected. He joined her instantly; and, offering his arm, addressed to her some of the usual phrases on such occasions; to which, however, she declined all reply, except by an affirmative movement of the head. He conducted her to a box, and requested her to unmask; but he could neither induce her to comply with this entreaty, nor to answer his questions. At length, maddened by what he deemed her crafty attempt to avoid detection, he tore the mask from her face, and beheld — an utter stranger.

He was rushing from her presence, frenzied by shame and disappointment, when the voice of his wife, in the adjoining box, struck on his ear. With one effort and bound, he burst into it, and discovered M. de Melfort, and Alicia in a paroxysm of tears.

“ Vile woman !” exclaimed the furious husband ; “ at last, then, I have detected you in your infamy ! And you, sir,” he added, with increasing vehemence, turning to the astonished De Melfort—“ you, her paramour, come with me instantly, that this foul disgrace may be effaced in your blood, or mine !”

Alicia fell, fainting, to the ground ; and De Melfort, having attempted to raise her, received a violent blow from the maniacal husband.

A crowd collected round the box ; and the presence and influence of so many strange faces, momentarily allayed the wrath of the desperate St. Armand. He instructed one of the *gens d'armes* to place madame in the carriage ; and then, giving him the address of her mother, ordered her to be conveyed to her residence.

St. Armand would listen to no explanation

that De Melfort could offer : and, in a few hours, he was a corpse ; having been killed by the first fire of his adversary, in the duel to which he had compelled him.

Of Alicia nothing remains to be told, except that she is an inmate of a *maison de santé*, with little probability of ever recovering her reason.

The plotters of the anonymous letters console themselves by asserting, that “ they did not expect that their *plaisanterie* would terminate so tragically : nor would it, had not the St. Armands been romantic *imbécilles* ; and, *therefore*, the whole fault rests with them.”

With this ingenious logic I conclude. But, perhaps, you will protest that, as the impartial chronicler of events which have excited so much attention, I ought to arbitrate between the opposing parties, and adjudicate the degree of censure which they should incur. *En vérité*, then, I think the St. Armands *were* very silly,

sensitive people ; but that their antagonists had rather a greater love of *tracasserie* than, *comme il faut*, people ought to possess.

The moral—as every tale should have one—is, that people should not pretend to be better or happier than their neighbours, lest they become victims to a *mystification de société*.

Addio, cara mia !

Ever thine,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

BY
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

" 'Tis you that say it, not I; you do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words."

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY CONDUIT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXVII.

THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

FROM THE MARQUISE DE VILLEROI
TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

YOUR voluminous packet has been following me to three or four *châteaux*, where I have been paying visits; so that it is now several weeks since it was written. It was, nevertheless, as all your letters are, very acceptable; and I thank you for the lively sketches it contained.

Your *séjour* in England, *ma chère* Caroline, will render you a philosopher of the cynical school; for your *apperçu des mœurs Anglais est un peu mechant, mais bien amusant. C'est un genre de philosophie*, which begins to be much

à-la-mode here, but which it requires great tact and *esprit* to display gracefully and successfully.

You possess both in a pre-eminent degree ; which you must not be offended if I attribute to your long residence in France, where they are indigenous : while in your island they are exotics, that rarely flourish, and still more rarely are successfully exhibited.

Chez vous, ma chère, notre esprit, when imported, is like our fashions, which are so clumsily adopted, but not adapted, that they disfigure, rather than embellish, your compatriots. Witness the bedizened English ladies, whose laborious exertions to appear well dressed, and still more laborious efforts to shine in conversation, in the *spirituelles réunions* in our gay capital, have afforded, and still afford, us so much amusement.

Ces pauvres dames, with that want of perception which is one of their principal cha-

racteristics, always fancied that we were laughing *with*, and not *at*, them ; and returned in triumph to their land of fogs, as dense as their wits, to relate their *succes à Paris*.

We were reverting to some of these miladies, last evening, at *la Duchesse de Mirrecourt's*, when she related, that one of them had gravely told her that she had studied philosophy with a Scots professor, that many of her countrywomen did the same, and that she was surprised that the French ladies did not follow their example.

“ Then you imagine, *ma chère dame*, that we French have no philosophy ? ” asked *la duchesse*.

“ I confess that such is my impression ; for you are all so gay, so cheerful, that I conclude you have not studied so grave a science, ” replied milady.

“ Oh! then, we are to attribute to philosophy, that gravity, *tristesse*, and *ennui*, *que vous nommez*, blue devils,” said *la duchesse*, with an arch smile, furtively directed to her coterie.

“ Yes,” answered milady; “ *we* are superior to the gaiety that characterises your nation; *we* reflect, *we* feel, more than you do.”

“ *Enfin*, you are philosophers, and we are not,” resumed *la duchesse*. “ I admit that you ought to possess much more philosophy than we do, for you expend so much less. Rarely, indeed, do you use any portion of this treasure: witness your oft-beginning, never-ending, murmurs against your weather, your climate, your *ennui*, and all the other inevitable ills to which people are subject; while we apply all the philosophy we can acquire to support, or forget them. We expend our philosophy like prodi-

gals, and it adds to our enjoyments ; you hoard yours like misers, and it gives you no advantage.

“ You boast of your superior wisdom, and smile somewhat contemptuously at our frivolous gaiety : while we envy not, but pity, your sombre gravity ; as we believe that the people who support the ills of life with the most cheerfulness, and forget them with the greatest facility, are the happiest, and, consequently, the wisest. *You* are above this happiness, and *we* are superior to the *ennui* which sends half your nation wandering into every clime ; as if locomotion could relieve a malady that arises in the discontented mind, which pursues you in all your migrations. Yet you assert that you travel to be amused ; but, instead of finding interest, or amusement, in what you behold, you discover only faults. Every thing is compared with your own country, — that country

whence your *ennui* drove you, and which, while in it, you decry, but the moment you desert it, you exalt. We, however, always find our *belle France* the best of countries, and, consequently, rarely leave it."

Notre bonne duchesse has a habit of never citing the arguments employed by her adversary, unless they are so weak as to be easily refuted; so, as she did not repeat what defence your compatriot made, I am led to conclude it was not so deficient in sense as the few phrases our friend selected for quotation might otherwise have induced us to suppose. The *duchesse*, however, more than insinuates that she silenced milady;—a possibility, I think, less doubtful than the implied assertion that she also convinced her.

Notre chère Paris is so much changed since you left it, that it is hardly to be recognised. We royalists totally avoid a court where, at

the *fêtes* given, one may be jostled by one's *coiffeur*, *modiste*, and *cordonnier*, in the uniform of the national guard, profaning, by their presence, those *salons* which, since the restoration, have been sacred to the *noblesse*. With all our modern philosophy, such *rencontres* would be more than one of *l'ancien régime* could support: hence, we carefully abstain from the Tuileries, and have the credit of *dévouement* to the exiled family; while, if the truth were told, a horror of finding ourselves in *mauvaise compagnie* operates much more strongly in attaching us to the old order of things.

Of politics I shall say nothing, except that Louis Philippe proves the truth of your Shakspeare's assertion,—

“ Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”

Florestan is still *l'esclave de la Comtesse*

D'Hauteville, who, I suspect, encourages his natural propensity to extravagance. I have lately seen her wear some very fine pearls, which, I am sure, were his gift; and I have observed certain symptoms of a derangement in his finances, that prove *qu'il est gêné*. *Pauvre Florestan!* I retain a warm attachment to him, though I smile when I compare it with the ungovernable passion I felt when we were married. *C'est malheureux que l'amour ne puisse pas durer!* *Apropos d'amour, le duc m'est toujours dévoué*, which is a great consolation. His mother lately found a rich heiress for him; an acquisition that would have been very acceptable to his finances, which are not very flourishing: but he would not hear of her proposal:—a rare example of attachment, in our days of selfishness.

I was almost tempted to pity your poor little friend Augusta, at being talked into a

marriage for which she had no predilection — *pauvre petite!* *Mais*, it will be all the same in a year hence; for she will then, probably, feel less indifference towards her husband than if she had loved him when she married; and will be spared all the annoyances to which women who love their husbands are subjected.

Heigh-ho! Do you remember how jealous I used to be of Florestan? Never shall I forget my despair at discovering his first infidelity. I thought I should die—ay, and wished it too, simpleton as I was; and now, I can see him lavish on another those attentions that were once all mine, and see it without a pang. We are the best friends in the world; and, after all, this is the next best thing to being lovers. It took me a long time, however, to make this discovery; nor do I think I should have arrived at it had not the *duc* come to my aid.

Nothing helps to make us forget an old love so much as a new ; and I feel such an attachment to the *duc*, that it is only when I recall to memory the still more vivid and wild one I once entertained for Florestan, that I am forced to recollect the melancholy truth, that love *can* change.

Marry some *très riche et puissant seigneur*, *ma chère* Caroline, and come to Paris, where you will be joyfully welcomed by

Votre amie affectionnée,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

Mon mari vous dit mille choses aimables.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

You will be glad to hear, my dear Mary, that the poor child I have adopted thrives apace, and is really a source of comfort to me. His fondness of me, too, dear little fellow, increases; and he claps his hands, and crows with joy, when I appear. One half-hour spent in playing with him in my dressing-room, is worth whole hours spent in crowded *soirées* and balls; which, if it were not for Lord Nottingham, who has kindly undertaken to initiate me into the modes, customs, and persons of the new world into which I am launched, I should find, insupportable indeed. Lord Annandale insists on my being present at all their *fêtes*, rallies me on my preference for solitude, and seems desirous to fill up every moment with some new pleasure,—the search after which

I find as tiresome as he appears to think it agreeable.

He told me this morning, that I must be guarded in my observations in society, and not display my rusticity with regard to its general usages, under penalty of being exposed to its ridicule,—“ a penalty,” he added, looking most seriously, “ more to be dreaded than all others, being one which is never overcome.”

I asked to what he alluded, wondering what I could have said, to subject myself to so grave an exordium.

“ Did you not observe,” he replied, “ how Lord Henry Mercer laughed when you made that very *naïve* speech about Lady Harlestone? a few more such speeches will render you the talk of all the clubs; nay, more, the subject of their merriment. I thought the Comtesse of Hohenlinden would never have ceased laughing, when Mercer told her of it.”

I felt my anger a little excited, at learning that I had been ridiculed, while ignorant as to the cause ; and my reflections led to his making me a disclosure that has shocked and disgusted me. Yes, Mary ; the man who has vowed to love and protect me, and whom I have vowed to love, honour, and obey, has torn the bandage from my eyes, by informing me, that nearly all the women in the circle in which I live — that circle into which *he* has led me — are supposed to have attachments with the men whom I, in the simplicity of my heart, believed to be their husbands, judging from the familiar attentions I witnessed — and which attentions I thought, even from husbands, too familiar for public exhibition !

“ And, knowing the conduct of these women,” said I, “ you could permit them to approach me ! ”

“ You must, really, my dear Augusta,”

was his reply, "learn to understand society. The ladies you allude to are the most fashionable in London, — universally sought after and received, and living on the best terms with their husbands. Why, then, should I object to your associating with them? Such an absurd piece of prudery would expose me to the ridicule of all London, were I so wanting in tact as to put it in practice."

"If the ladies in question," replied I, and I felt my cheeks glow with indignation, "are sought after, and well received, and live on the best terms with their husbands, it must be because, adding hypocrisy to vice, they deceive the world, and the husbands they betray."

"By no means: society has no right to pry into the private conduct of any woman whose husband has not denounced her; and most husbands have too much philosophy, or good-nature, to be severe towards their wives,

who, grateful for their forbearance, repay it by similar indulgence. Lady C. receives Lady D., because it is agreeable to Lord C., who, in turn, permits the constant presence of Mr. E., and thus domestic harmony is preserved, *esclandres* avoided, and husbands and wives, who no longer could be lovers, instead of proving a source of mutual *gêne* and torment, become friends."

"You surely jest," said I, "and are imposing on my inexperience, by the statements you have just made."

"*Pas de tout, ma chère*; I assure you I have only stated the fact. Nine out of every ten married pairs belonging to *our* circle, stand precisely in the position I have described, which is the secret of the good understanding that subsists between the greater number of them."

“ And you approve of this odious, this demoralising system ?” asked I.

“ Why, as my disapproval would not change it, and would inevitably draw down on me the hatred of all our *clique*, I think it more prudent to submit *en philosophe*. People never forgive those who would either amend or instruct them ; and, as I wish to enjoy life, I am content to let others please themselves, in preference to rendering them displeased with me. Besides, *you* are too charming, and *I* am too sensible of your charms to be likely to take advantage of the latitude allowed to Benedicts, or to have eyes for any other beauty.”

As he thus spoke he kissed my hand, with an air as gallant as that with which *le premier danseur* of a *ballet* kisses *la premiere danseuse* ; but, seeing the grave, and, perhaps, contemptuous expression my countenance assumed, he changed his tone, and said,—

“ Do not look so very much shocked, I beseech you ; let us take the world as we find it, my dear Augusta, and be content with being as good as we can be ourselves, without trying to become reformers of others.”

“ I am not so Utopian as to expect to reform society,” resumed I ; “ but I can see no necessity of associating with people whose principle and conduct are so diametrically opposite to all that I have ever been taught to respect.”

“ Why, you surely would not be so unreasonable as to wish me to close our doors against all the fashionable world, because they have emancipated themselves from prejudices, the acting up to which was incompatible with happiness ?”

“ Prejudices !” I exclaimed ; “ is it possible, Lord Annandale, that you can thus confound virtue and vice ? that the chastity of a

wife, and the fidelity of a husband, can be considered as prejudices?"

"Really, my dear Augusta, your inexperience makes you view things in so strange a light, that there is no reasoning with you. Do not, I pray you, become that most disagreeable of all things, a prude; or that most repellant to my nature, a sectarian."

So saying, he quitted the room, leaving me to chew the cud of bitter, not sweet, fancies; and to regret, still more than ever, the infatuation and wilfulness that led me to bind myself to one I can neither love nor respect. Now is explained to me the cause of all that freedom of manner, that levity, and, above all, the easy indifference, with which the people I meet conduct themselves in society.

And it was a husband's hand who removed the veil from my eyes, and shewed me guilt in all its hideous deformity, of which I never

should have formed an idea! But, now that it is exposed to me, ought I to consent to receive beneath my roof persons of whose vices I can no longer entertain a doubt? Do I not owe it to virtue, nay, to myself, to avoid them? nor give the sanction of my presence to their conduct? I seem to have grown old within a few hours: this fatal knowledge of evil has shocked and grieved me; and the very air I breathe appears heavy and oppressive, from my newly discovered sense of the crimes that contaminate it.

Lord Nottingham cannot, surely, be one of those that Lord Annandale has been describing. No; he too much resembles Lord Delaward to have any sentiment in common with those around me. He found me yesterday with little St. Aubyn on my knee, who, as usual, was crowing and smiling to shew his love for me. The poor little fellow can now say, "mamma,"

very plainly ; and, proud of his success, frequently repeats the endearing epithet. Lord Nottingham took him in his arms, played with, and kissed him, and quite won the child and his nurse's heart, by his notice of him.

I like to see men fond of children ; it proves a kind heart and gentle nature. Lord Nottingham does not appear to esteem any of the women who most frequent the Comtesse Hohenlinden's ; he treats them and her, too, with distant civility, while they are more condescending in their politeness to him, than is, in my opinion, compatible with the dignity of the sex. But what know, or feel, they of feminine dignity ?

Caroline Montessor declares herself quite satisfied with London, though she complains that the women are not *spirituelles*, nor the men sufficiently *empressés* in their attentions to them. The *comtesse* is a very old and intimate

friend of hers, and they pass much of their time together. There is a levity and coarseness about this lady, that, in spite of her good-humour and gaiety, are very offensive to me; but Caroline resents, as a personal affront, any animadversions of mine on the subject.

In three months, my dear father and mother will be in town. How I long to find myself in their arms again! I feel as if I had been years, instead of a few weeks, absent from them; and as if I had, during the period of our separation, existed in a cold and chilling atmosphere, that rendered the sunshine of their affection more than ever dear, and vitally necessary, to your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

MY DEAREST AUGUSTA, — I have reflected long and deeply on your last letter. I feel the painful dilemma in which you are placed ; and, though I perfectly agree with you in thinking that it would be most agreeable, as well as most virtuous, to avoid all intercourse with women of whose vices we are not ignorant ; still, in the present state of society, and, above all, with a husband who attaches so much importance to its suffrages, prudence inclines me to advise you to be content in refraining from all intimacy with the parties in question, and not occasion an *esclandre*, by shutting your doors wholly against them.

In large assemblies, persons meet very much as in the round room of the opera, Vauxhall, or

any other public place of resort ; and, though the contact may not be agreeable, it does not entail intimacy : a dignified courtesy of manners, equally removed from rudeness as from familiarity, will repel freedom, and preclude offence.

Let your reserve be attributed to domestic habits ; to, in fact, any motive, rather than one so pregnant with danger to her who avows it, as a censure of the conduct of those who, conscious how justly it is merited, never forgive the inflicter, and revenge the implied slight by every means in their power.

Receive the ladies whose presence society still sanctions, though virtue disclaims them ; but receive them only in large parties, and avoid all approaches to intimacy with them. This sacrifice of your own feelings of propriety must be offered up to preserve peace with your husband, whose sentiments being totally op-

posed to yours, I fear there is no chance of inducing him to adopt your views.

Wholly to oppose his projects would be to embitter your home, or, perhaps, banish him from it; leaving him to the influence of those who, from your exclusion of them, would be most irritated against, and disposed to injure you.

The unfortunate intimacy of Miss Montresor with the Comtesse Hohenlinden increases the difficulty of your position. Among all the women whose impropriety of conduct has served to throw an odium on the sex, there is not one whose career has been marked by a more unblushing perseverance in vice; or by a more open disregard for the appearances which, if they cannot redeem, at least conceal, its grossness, than this lady.

Her high birth and distinguished position have only tended to draw public attention still

more to the glaring errors that she takes, indeed, no pains to disguise. Hence, her being known to be a frequent visitor beneath your roof, must subject you to many disagreeable animadversions; and give cause of additional offence to any of, or all, the not more culpable ladies you exclude.

Under these circumstances, I would advise your candidly expressing your sentiments to Miss Montessor, with sufficient firmness to make her respect them.

You must be continually on your guard, my dearest Augusta, not to form habits of intimacy with any man, however amiable and good. This restriction is rendered indispensable by a state of society, in which the worst offenders are naturally the severest judges, for they estimate others by themselves; and it is almost an axiom in human character, that it acquires suspicion in proportion as it loses

innocence. Remember, then, that you live among those who are ever prone to regard an approach to friendship between persons of different sexes with uncharitable eyes. They are sceptics in the sympathy of virtue, precisely because they are devout believers in the connexions of vice.

The consciousness of innocence, though it enables us to bear up against calumny and injustice, cannot prevent the anguish of the wounds they inflict, wounds no salve can heal, and from which no time can smooth away the scar.

Appearances must be strictly preserved by the innocent (who, from conscious rectitude, are too often the persons most liable to neglect them); lest the guilty attempt to palliate their own improprieties by directing attention to the semblance of error in the good.

The most really immaculate woman, who is

inconsiderate enough to admit the daily visits of any man, or to permit his attentions, however respectful, to become remarked in public, must not be surprised if she is confounded with the most guilty; who are naturally anxious to blazon abroad the seeming indecorum that keeps their own faulty conduct in countenance.

The world judges only from appearances. By preserving these, the guilty obscure the view of their delinquencies; and become, consequently, less pernicious than if they exhibited reckless and unveiled vice. But those who, to vice, add the shamelessness of its exhibition, have to answer, not only for their own sins, but for the corruption their example promotes.

How many women, free from a thought of crime, have, through a carelessness as to preserving appearances, compromised their

reputations, and dragged on a long life of humiliation, with no other consolation but that of knowing, that to imprudence, and not guilt, they owe their sufferings!

You, my dearest Augusta, will not peruse with impatience this long homily, but accept it as a proof of the affectionate interest of your true friend,

MARY DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

I AM happy to be able to tell you, my dear Augusta, that your excellent father and mother are in perfect health; and that our endeavours to console them for the loss of your society have not been totally unsuccessful. They can

now revert to your absence with less sorrow, though not with less affection ; and this is something gained. We have induced them to prolong their stay with us, which, I trust, will be beneficial to their spirits, as well as to those of my dear father, who much enjoys the presence of such old and valued friends. Being anxious to make you acquainted with some of the persons whose society has rendered London agreeable to me, I have written to them to call on you ; the period of my returning to town being too uncertain to admit of my waiting to present them to you personally.

I hope you will cultivate more than a mere visiting acquaintance with them ; for they are of that portion of our aristocracy and gentry whose unsullied reputations, and irreproachable lives, present a barrier against that censure on our order which the indecorum and levity of some of its stray branches have drawn upon it.

They nobly uphold the fame and honour once so generally and so justly decreed to British women, before, at the mandate of fashion, some of them had learned to disregard that external propriety which should ever accompany virtue.

The Duchess of Fitzwalter you will find a most estimable person, and as agreeable as she is amiable, although the *clique* who have assumed the supremacy of fashion, vote her, and her circle, dull and *ennuyeuse* ; but, with them, decorum is only another name for dulness. Lady Erpingham is also a charming person ; and Mrs. Algernon Wentworth is as unaffected and unspoilt as if she were neither a beauty nor a wit. I have especially named these three ladies to you, as being my most intimate friends ; but the others to whom I have written to request that they will call on you, are not less amiable.

Much of your happiness, as well as your position and estimation in society, dear Augusta, will depend on the associations you form, and the friendships you cultivate. In the houses of the ladies I have named, you will find men of merit and high attainments, and women of unpretending talents, undoubted sense, and unsuspected purity.

They do not, it is true, give names to caps or bonnets ; they are not patronesses of Almack's, nor frequenters of the Zoological Gardens on the Sabbath-day ; and, to sum up all, they are *not* leaders of fashion,—a distinction never sought by the wise, and only valued by the foolish. The Duchess of Fitzwalter being many years your senior, and having a knowledge of life, rarely acquired except at the expense of some of those fine qualities peculiar to youth, all of which she has preserved,—her society and experience will be highly advantageous to you,

in enabling you to form a just estimate of those around you. It will be even more beneficial to you than that of a person of more advanced years, whose sombre view of the world is often no less erroneous than is the bright one of youth: for youth resembles a Claude Lorraine glass, which imparts to all objects its own beautiful tint; but age too often resembles a magnifying lens of an ungracious hue, which only renders every defect more conspicuous, and more forbidding. I would have you view the world through neither medium; but through the clear mirror presented to you by the experience of this excellent woman—a mirror undimmed by prejudice, and unsullied by ill-nature.

There is an evil against which I would guard you, dear Augusta, because it is one fraught with danger, but into which, from inexperience of the world, too many young married women fall: I allude to the habit

of receiving male visitors of a morning; a habit which engenders a degree of familiarity that, however innocent, I hold to be incompatible with the dignity of a matron.

The woman who permits her boudoir or drawing-room to be made the daily lounge of men, soon loses that consideration, even among them, which every honourable woman ought to inspire. Her *salon* becomes the focus of gossiping; scandal creeps in; party politics are soon intruded; the sanctity and privacy of home are violated; and the modest reserve, which is one of the most beautiful distinctions of the female character, is replaced by a freedom of manner as unbecoming as it is reprehensible. But I have not yet enumerated all the evils of this habit, so generally adopted at present; I have only stated the bad effect likely to accrue to the woman's manners who permits it. Let me now draw your attention to the

injury it is almost certain to inflict on her reputation.

The cabriolet or saddle-horses of a man of fashion, seen repeatedly at the door of a lady, are sure to elicit disagreeable animadversions from those, perhaps, totally unacquainted with her. These observations are related to others, generally with added comments, and not unfrequently with misrepresentations; reports get into circulation, and scandal becomes busy with her fame, which is too often sullied before an evil thought has entered her mind.

When once such reports have been promulgated, all her actions are misinterpreted; every appearance of gaiety or levity is tortured into a proof of guilt; and the most innocent woman, whose conduct is thus prejudged from the semblance of impropriety which her own imprudence has furnished, could hardly fail to be ultimately condemned.

Is not this a heavy penalty to pay for the pleasure, if pleasure it may be called, of enduring the tediousness of a few idle men some twice or thrice a-week, during those hours which they know not how otherwise to occupy? They are aware of the evil consequences such visits will entail on her who permits them, for they daily hear the scandalous comments that similar conduct excites; but *n'importe*: as long as they are bantered on their supposed good fortune at their clubs, or paragraphed in the newspapers, they are satisfied, though it is at the expense of the reputation of an innocent woman.

Lord Delaward has initiated me into all the mysteries of society, which had seemed unfathomable to my own previous inexperience. He is my Mentor, who points out the dangers of which only a skilful pilot can steer clear; and I furnish you, my dear Augusta, with a few extracts from my newly-acquired knowledge.

Your last letter gave me great pain, a spirit of sadness pervaded it that must not be indulged. Indeed, you are unjust to Lord Anandale in expecting from him precisely those qualities in which he is deficient, and in not appreciating those that he really possesses. If he be neither sentimental nor domestic, he is good-tempered and kind-hearted ; and you may, by treating him with affection, render him more estimable. Do not, while cherishing his child, harden your feelings against its father ; and remember that, though a too long and constant association with the artificial circle in which he has lived may have blunted his sensibility, you may again restore its natural tone by letting him perceive that you are interested in the change.

Adieu, my dear Augusta, and ever believe me your most affectionate friend,

MARY DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

THE contents of your former letter* pained me inexpressibly, my dearest Mary; and yet, even before I gave Caroline Montessor an opportunity of refuting the imputation cast upon her honour, I felt persuaded that the charge was wholly unfounded. I was more than half disposed to let her remain in ignorance of the aspersion; but, on reflection, I thought it right to acquaint her with it, that she might justify her reputation to those who, unlike me, might be inclined to repose some portion of belief on the calumny.

How painful was it to my friendship to

* This refers to Lady Delaward's Letter, Vol. I. page 194, in which the charge against Miss Montessor's honour is made, but which Lady Annandale did not receive for some time after.

inflict this wound on her! Never did I perform a duty with more reluctance; and I endeavoured to discharge it with as much delicacy as possible. She was greatly shocked; and evinced so much proper feeling on the occasion, that she convinced me, and would, I am sure, have satisfied you, of her innocence.

Levity, and a certain freedom in conversation, peculiar to women who aspire to the reputation of a *bel esprit*, are her only sins. They are venial ones, and should not be visited with undue severity. The tale that reached you originated in the malice of a disappointed suitor of Caroline's, the Chevalier de Carency, a dissolute young man, who became enamoured of her while she was yet little more than a child. Enraged at her rejection of him, he vowed to be revenged; and the story he invented and related to Lord Warrenborough is the result.

I am convinced that you, my dear Mary, will rejoice at being assured of the innocence of my friend, as I know the generosity of your nature: for my own part, I experience an increased attachment to her, now that I know the injustice to which she has been subjected; an injustice doubly painful to the feelings, as being exercised to an orphan, without a single male relative to defend or to avenge her. How dreadful it is to reflect that men can exist capable of the baseness of defaming the virtue they could not overcome, and ought, consequently, to defend! Pray, inform Lord Delaward of Caroline's innocence; for I would not have one, to whose good opinion I attach so much importance, continue in error with regard to my poor friend.

My dear boy continues to thrive apace, and seems every day to grow more fond of me. He is a charming child, and you would be delighted with him, he is so good-tempered and

engaging. Lord Nottingham is very partial to him, and St. Aubyn already knows him quite well, goes to him gladly, and sits on his knee. I wish I could say that Lord Anandale evinced an equal fondness; but this is far from being the case, for he betrays an indifference towards him that quite shocks and displeases me. The poor dear little fellow seems conscious of his father's want of affection, and instinctively, as it were, shrinks from him when he approaches.

The Duchess of Fitzwalter has been here, and I like the little I have seen of her extremely, notwithstanding that she appeared under disadvantageous circumstances; for when she called, the Comtesse Hohenlinden, who is evidently no favourite with her, was here, and displayed a levity, and, I may add, an indecorum, in her conversation and manner, that must have prejudiced the duchess, not only against her, but also against me, for suffering

it. I felt that a disagreeable impression was made on your friend's mind, but I had no means of removing it; for any verbal reproof of mine would have been as little heeded as are the tacit ones which I have frequently given to this incorrigible comtesse.

Lord Annandale, when informed of the visit of the Duchess of Fitzwalter, signified his desire that I should avoid all intimacy with her, or "her coterie," as he termed the persons who are precisely those whom I should prefer; and are, in fact, the very ladies with whom you most wished me to cultivate an intercourse. He observed, that the duchess was peculiarly repugnant to his taste; and, by her formality and *hauteur*, spread a gloom wherever she appeared. He animadverted, in terms fraught with satire and ridicule, on the line of demarcation the duchess and her friends had drawn around their circle; the *cordon sani-*

taire, as he banteringly styled it, that was to exclude the contagion of gaiety and wit.

It is plain to me that the Comtesse Hohenlinden, piqued by the cold reception she meets with among the ladies in question, has sought to prejudice Lord Annandale against them, and has but too well succeeded. The women who frequent Annandale House are remarkable for an indescribable tone, a strange mixture of levity and *fierté*, as disagreeable as it is incongruous. They are all the copyists of the Comtesse Hohenlinden, but less good-humoured ; and there is not one amongst them who has excited an interest in my mind, or with whom I should wish to form a friendship.

Ah! how right were you, dearest Mary, when you prophesied that London and its pleasures would disappoint my expectations! This perpetual round of amusement, without one day of privacy or repose, fatigues me

mentally and bodily. It is like a brilliant comedy where the curtain never drops, and where both actors and audience are alike wearied. Often do I sigh for the shades of Vernon Hall, with its tranquil enjoyments, allowing one to entertain a consciousness of one's own identity; while here, one is literally rendered incapable of self-recognition, or even self-communion: thought is banished by continuous and frivolous dissipation, and the affections seem useless in an atmosphere where there is no time permitted for their exercise.

When, a few days ago, I expressed a wish that my dear father and mother would come to London, Lord Annandale asked me how it would be possible to find sufficient time to satisfy them, old people being, as he rudely said, always *exigeant*.

How little he knows them! I answered, that no engagements could have half such

temptations for me as the society of those I so dearly love.

“But you have duties, Augusta,” he said, “that must be fulfilled.”

“What duties,” demanded I, “can preclude the sacred one to our parents?”

He positively laughed, and *I* felt angry—there is something so peculiarly offensive, at least to my feelings, in hearing the best, the most holy sentiments in our nature, thus made a subject of mockery.

Seeing I was hurt, he apologised, but added,—

“You owe, also, duties to society, my dear Augusta, that must not be neglected. You are expected to appear at the houses of certain note, and to receive in your own all the persons of distinction. Your position, as *my* wife,”—and he looked as if he considered this my sole claim to distinction,—“demands this ;

and such engagements, during the London season, are too numerous to admit of devoting any time to others. In the autumn, or during the winter, if we do not go abroad, you can give up a week or two to your father and mother at Vernon Hall; though, I venture to prophesy, you would now find a *séjour* there, even of that brief duration, insupportably dull."

I asserted that, on the contrary, I should like it above all things; when he shrugged his shoulders, looked incredulous, and told me, it gave him pain to see me growing sentimental and romantic, instead of becoming a woman of the world.

And this, Mary, is the man, to marry whom I wrung a reluctant consent from my dear, dear father and mother! There is insupportable bitterness in the reflection!

I foresee that I shall find Lord Annandale little disposed to consult the wishes of my

family, or my own, in arranging that we should see as much of each other as possible. Could I have anticipated this, no power would have induced me to marry him, even though he had possessed my whole heart. But I am rightly rewarded for bestowing my hand on one of whom I knew nothing, except that he was gay and brilliant — two advantages which often temporarily conceal the absence of those solid qualities on which domestic happiness depends. *He* is not changed since I made this fatal, this rash engagement; the change is in *me*, who, seeing the worthlessness of those pleasures he so glowingly described to tempt me, — pleasures now deprived of the glittering veil that disguised their defects, — turn, with disappointment, from the temptation and the tempter.

Forgive these murmurs, dear Mary, from

Your affectionate friend,

AUGUSTA ANNANDALE.

FROM MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

YOUR story has interested me exceedingly, *ma chère* Delphine. I do remember having seen Madame de St. Armand, and was struck with her beauty. I have praised you before, but I now tell you again, that the tale is so artistically recounted, that it might be entitled to a place in one of the fashionable annuals here, to which lords and ladies contribute. Have I your permission to send it, merely changing the names? so that you may have the satisfaction of seeing it beautifully printed, gold-edged, and bound in a gorgeous cover, with some pretty face to illustrate it.

But, to be serious — and this melancholy story is sufficient to make one so — it is a very distressing event; and the ladies who con-

cocted the plot cannot feel otherwise than shocked at its results. *Entre nous*, I do believe, that there is no creature under heaven more wholly heartless, or more disposed to be mischievous, than a fine lady; and the fact of the plot against the unoffending St. Armands goes far to prove the justice of this assertion. Do not imagine that I confound a gentlewoman with a fine lady, in this censure. No; according to my view of the subject, a fine lady is rarely a gentlewoman, and a gentlewoman would not often condescend to be a fine lady.

Formerly, the terms "fine lady," and "fine gentleman," were applied to women and men peculiarly well-bred, and of remarkably polished manners: now, they are employed to designate some individuals remarkable for the affectation of fastidiousness, and the exemplification of folly, the assumption of *bon ton*, and the personification of vulgarity; the pretensions to

ultra-refinement being, in my opinion, the most infallible symptoms of incurable coarseness of mind. The fine lady in France is, however, free from these assumptions. She is merely a vain and giddy woman, living only for amusement, capable of any folly, and, sometimes (as in the case of the St. Armands,) of any crime, to accelerate her plans in the pursuit of it.

I have been much pained and mortified, *chère* Delphine, by finding that my unfortunate entanglement with that vile and unworthy wretch, de Carency, has reached Lady Annandale, who, with the frankness peculiar to her nature, told me the fact. I hardly knew whether she or I felt the more pain or shame at the disclosure, softened, as it was, by her mode of detailing it. She is not, like me, schooled in deception, — that art which the world renders necessary, — and possesses not

the power of concealing all external symptoms of those emotions to which the heart is a prey, even while tortured by them. This fair and pure creature blushed and wept while she repeated the tale that had been communicated to her as a warning against me ; while I, writhing beneath the torture of humiliation at its truth, and shame at the detection, quelled my feelings sufficiently to exhibit only a proper degree of indignation at what I termed the falsehood of the base accusation.

The wretch to whom I owe this indignity revealed the fatal truth to some English lord, shortly after his flight from Florence, without the precaution of concealing my name. He even related your story, as well as mine. Would to God I had never seen this unequalled miscreant !

Lady Annandale thought it her duty, as my friend, to repeat to me the statement ; and never can I forget the delicacy, the sensibility, with

which she communicated it. I made, as I have said a desperate, but, *grace à mes nerfs*, successful effort to acquire self-control, seeing that my position in society, my very fate, depended on my convincing her that I am a victim to calumny. I stated that this dissolute man had proposed to marry me while I was yet little more than a child; that, maddened by my rejection of his suit, he had invented this atrocious falsehood; and that, imagining you to have prepossessed me against him, he had also vilified you.

This explanation, with a few fervent declarations of horror at the infamous charge, and agony at the idea of any human being crediting, or even hearing it, drew from this warm-hearted and noble-minded woman a flood of tears of the softest pity, and protestations of eternal constancy and friendship.

I was subdued by her generous sympathy, and could not restrain the emotions it excited.

Yes, Delphine, there are moments when my better nature seems to triumph over the worldliness that has so long hardened it, and I again feel susceptible of the gentle affections that are, I begin to think, indigenous in woman's heart.

I told Augusta that, rather than expose her to the censure of those who could believe me guilty, I would immediately return to the abode of my aunt; but she would not hear of such a measure. She insisted on my remaining the whole season with her; and, though always kind, now redoubled her affectionate attention to me. I mentioned something about the possibility of Lord Annandale's hearing the tale in question; but she stopped me by saying, that it was quite unlikely he should, for that the friend who had thought it necessary to communicate it to her would never name it to any one else.

This friend is, I am persuaded, Lady Delward; and her knowledge of my disgrace ac-

counts for her invariable coldness and *hauteur* towards me. How dreadful it is, *chère Delphine*, to have to blush before a proud and stern woman, who has heard of one's guilt, and who believes it! My asseverations of innocence would have fallen on an incredulous ear, had they been addressed to Lady Delaward; but never should they have been addressed to *her*. No, forbid it, pride! forbid it, shame! I would rather hide me in some distant region, where never human sympathy could reach me, than meet the reproachful glance of a cold-hearted prude, after having weakly and vainly attempted to mollify her proud and callous nature, by a voluntary and abject confession of my crime and remorse. With such beings I should be for ever indomitable, stern, and reckless, with scorn and mockery on my lips; while, with Augusta, weeping and blushing at being compelled to repeat an accusation of me,

I feel every harsh emotion subdued, and am ready to throw myself at her feet, avow my errors, and implore her to remodel, correct, and guide me. Such is the influence her softness and generous pity exert over my stubborn heart.

Why did I urge this fair creature to wed one so wholly unworthy of her as is Lord Annandale, and so totally incapable of appreciating her? Lord Nottingham is precisely the sort of man with whom she would have been happy, as all I see of both of them convinces me. They would have met — would, I am sure, have loved — and, in all human probability, have married, and enjoyed the felicity they deserve, but for me. Her conduct on the late trying occasion, makes me regret more than ever my fatal interference. I am interrupted, so must leave you.

Chère amie, toujours votre

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

Do not consider me ill-natured or obstinate when I confess to you, my dear Augusta, that my doubts relative to Miss Montessor's purity are still unremoved. *Her* assertion, in her own case, is surely insufficient proof of her innocence, to any but a too partial friend. Are not the charges against her borne out by the extraordinary levity and indecorum of her manners? I acknowledge that all I have seen of her but too well disposes me to lend credence to what I have heard; and, coupling the tale of the Chevalier de Carency with the unfeminine freedom of her opinions, one appears to me as an evidence of the other. If I were less deeply, warmly interested in your

welfare, I might be less severely disposed towards this lady : but when I reflect that she is an inmate beneath your roof, your daily associate — nay, more, your friend,—I examine, with rigid eyes, her claims to such distinction ; and, finding them so defective, would fain preserve you from contact with one whom I deem most unworthy. I fear my pertinacious adherence to the evil opinion I entertain of her will displease you, but I cannot vanquish it ; and again I entreat you to guard against her influence.

I lament that Lord Annandale wishes you to avoid an acquaintance with the friends I was so desirous you should know. I dare say you have judged rightly in imagining his prejudices to proceed from the pique of the Comtesse Hohenlinden. Nothing serves more to render a person averse from *good* company than the habit of associating with *bad* ; and,

in the circle in which Lord Annandale has moved, all who are moral and decorous are pronounced to be dull. There is policy in this opinion; for, as the really good would not countenance the *clique* to which I refer, they proclaim their dislike of what they know they cannot attain. Notwithstanding I entirely disapprove Lord Annandale's selection of associates for you, still let me advise you not to irritate him or them by any harsh censures. Patience is a woman's best armour; and gentleness, her only safe weapon. These may not have an *immediate*, but, I believe, they generally have a *sure* effect; and, therefore, I entreat you to use them always. A prudent woman will seek, not so much to *convict* her husband of error as to wean him from it; for men rarely pardon any exhibition of intellectual superiority in their wives, while they are soothed and gratified by meekness and affection.

You are young, lovely, and highly gifted ; Lord Annandale greatly admires you : why not convert this admiration into a sentiment more durable, more valuable, which would secure for you an influence over him most advantageous to his interests, and to your own ? Coldness and indifference never enabled a woman to gain an empire over a husband's heart ; and yet these are, even from your own confession, but too visible in your demeanour towards him. Can you, then, wonder that he appears careless of your wishes, or callous to your reasoning ? Remember, that Lord Annandale has been a spoiled child of fortune—indulged and flattered to satiety. Truth has rarely reached him, and the love of hearing it is like the partiality for olives, an acquired taste. The friend who administers this unpalatable medicine should render it less nauseous, by affectionate kindness ; so that its bitterness, like the physic

given to children, may be almost merged in the accompanying sweets. Do not abandon yourself to the dispiriting and erroneous belief that yours is an incurable lot; for it is only a persistence in thus thinking that can render it so. Duties discharged, domestic affections cultivated, and the consciousness of having no subject for self-reproach, preclude unhappiness; though they may not bestow that vivid, but evanescent feeling, which the young and romantic but too often mistake for it.

Believe me, my dear Augusta,

Your most affectionate friend,

MARY DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

You give me good counsel, dearest Mary; would to heaven that I had sufficient resolution to follow it! But I am a wayward creature, and cannot feign a semblance of affection when I do not entertain the sentiment. It would be wiser, and more amiable, to endeavour to win Lord Annandale to purer, better, feelings and pursuits,—even though, as I strongly suspect, the attempt would be utterly unavailing,—than to dwell on his defects, as I am prone to do: but when was I wise or amiable? Alas! never the first, and rarely, if ever, the second. You will reproach me if I dwell on this painful theme; I will, therefore, dismiss it, and adopt an agreeable one.

The only amusements I enjoy in London are the theatres, and the opera. One of the divine

Shakspeare's tragedies, with Macready to personate the chief character, can always charm me ; and at such representations I forget my chagrin and myself. I have always had, as you know, an inordinate passion for music ; but it has greatly increased since I have been accustomed to listen to the heart-stirring voice of the inspired Malibran, or the dulcet tones of la Grisi.

The first inimitable songstress draws me continually to Drury Lane, where she is engaged ; and it seems to me, that I listen with increased delight to her the more I become acquainted with the power and pathos of her voice. The low notes of it produce an effect on me that no others ever did. The sound appears to emanate from a soul thrilling with sublime emotions ; and its deep harmony causes mine to vibrate. There is something mysterious, something magical, in its influence on me. It haunts me for many succeeding

hours ; and seems to me as if it arose from an inspired, passionate, and despairing heart, in an intensely profound consciousness of the insufficiency of mortal powers to satisfy the aspirations of an immortal spirit to a release from its earthly trammels, and to the fulfilment of a wider and nobler destiny.

I have avoided becoming personally acquainted with Malibran, because, I am told, she is the most animated and gay person imaginable, giving utterance to the liveliest sallies, and most *naïve* observations. For this peculiarity, which draws a flattering homage around her, I shun her society ; because I would not have the associations with which she is mingled in my mind, disturbed by a light word or heartless jest from lips that seem to me only formed for the creation of the most sublime sounds. Those deep eyes of hers, too, have a profound melancholy, even in their flashing lustre ; and I have never so perfect a sympathy with my

compatriots, as when I hear those divine notes of hers followed by the plaudits of hundreds, too enthusiastically expressed to leave a doubt of the sincerity of the heartfelt admiration that excites them.

Malibran, in my opinion, seems to inspire her audience : they are no longer a vast crowd assembled to be amused ; no, they assume a much more imposing aspect. They are carried away by passionate emotion, by generous impulses, and they feel within themselves capabilities, of the existence of which they were previously ignorant. She ceases to be a mere singer, or paid actress, in their eyes ; she becomes an inspired sybil that reveals to them gleams of a purer, brighter world, which they had forgotten, but to which her divine tones summon them to return.

Grisi's voice, charming as it is, produces no such effect on me ; it is round, liquid,

limpid, and perfectly harmonious, always creating pleasurable emotions, but rarely sublime ones. It never awakens an echo in my heart — never lifts my thoughts from earth ; but, like the music of birds, it makes the earth more delightful, and the ear loves to drink in its dulcet tones. The voice of Malibran affects me as does sacred music ; and I should dislike hearing it employed in singing light airs, as much as I should hearing a cathedral organ playing a waltz or contre-danse.

Lablache's is also a voice that has great charms for me. It comes pealing forth, grand and powerful as a choir in some lofty temple ; while Rubini's always reminds me of the plaintive, never to be forgotten chant of the *Miserere* in the Sixtine chapel at Rome, which, though heard while I was yet only a child, I remember as distinctly as if it had been but yesterday.

Who could support the effect of music to which we had last listened in the society of one beloved, if death had snatched for ever from us that object? I, who have, thank Heaven! never known the most bitter of all pangs, that of mourning for a dear friend, yet cannot hear serious music without feeling a profound, but sweet melancholy, that brings unbidden tears to my eyes, and thoughts of another world to my mind. To see people around me smiling, or conversing, while a grave harmony is holding communion with my spirit, seems little short of profanation; and I could never select such soulless beings for my friends.

You, dear Mary, will not smile at my enthusiastic admiration for music, when I tell you, that never is a sense of religion so strongly impressed on me as when I am listening to it. Yet, I fear, you will say, that religion ought not to be a matter of feeling, but a fixed and

immutable principle, over which external sights or sounds should have no influence, or, at all events, no control. But I was ever a creature of impulses and instincts, one of the strongest of which is my affection for you — an affection that has never known a diminution in the heart of your

AUGUSTA.

FROM LORD VERNON TO THE COUNTESS
OF ANNANDALE.

Vernon Hall.

MY DEAREST CHILD. — We are returned to our home, and miss you so much that I have recourse to writing to you, in order to cheat myself into the belief that I am, as in past happy times, talking to my own Gusty. You must often repeat the assurances of your happiness, my blessed child, to console us for the loss of ours, which departed with you. Yet

I would not have you perfectly happy, Gusty, for I wish that you should feel the want of your mother, who so dearly loves you ; and of your old fond father, too, who so unwisely spoiled you, by his incapability of denying you any thing, that, at length, you, knowing his weakness, asked him to consent to your abandonment of him ; when he, silly, dotting man that he was, gave up his only joy, his only comfort.

Ah! Gusty, you should not have left us so soon. Three years hence would have been quite time enough for you to have married. In that period, we might have reasoned ourselves into living without you—you might have grown less fond, less engaging, less dear to us. But no, that never could have been ; the longer you might have remained with us, the less disposed should we have been to have parted from you !

This place is totally changed. The trees look dark and gloomy, the lawns cheerless, the lakes still and sullen ; and the birds seem to me to sing less gaily this year than I ever remember. Your mother, when I made this remark to her, said the change was in us, and not in the objects around. Perhaps she is right, my Gusty ; yet I do love to fancy, that all nature is influenced by your absence—but this is the folly of an old doting father.

I look after your flower-garden myself : every flower you loved seems to me to be a part of yourself ; and I cherish them, as those fair and fragile things were never before cherished. Wise people would tell me, that all this is very silly and foolish ; and so, I dare say, it is : but I cannot repress the feeling, any more than I can the disclosure of it to you, my own darling ; an impulse that I have always indulged, even at the time when you were a little

thing, and used to sit in my lap, and kiss my cheek, and run your fingers through my gray locks. Do you remember those happy days?

Your horse quite provoked me to-day. Would you believe it, the ungrateful animal went neighing, prancing, and galloping, through the paddock, in as great gaiety as if his mistress had been here? He made me angry; but I consoled myself by thinking that you would, at no remote period, I hope, repay him for his ingratitude by a daily, and long gallop over the downs.

I had intended not to have said a word about these things in my letter, but, somehow or other, they have all slipped out. But do not be uneasy at what I have told you, dearest Gusty — only never forget us. Let us have the consolation of knowing, that you think of us, miss us, and long for us, and we shall be satisfied, until you are again in our arms.

Lady Delaward behaved to us with a kindness and affection never to be forgotten; her lord, also, left nothing undone to cheer our spirits, but Lord Nottingham's considerate attention, if possible, surpassed theirs. He was so gentle, so steady, never in a hurry, as most young men always are; never betraying symptoms of impatience at hearing long stories from old people. Why, would you believe it, Gusty, he not only let your mother and I tell him every anecdote about your childhood,—and you know we have a precious long collection,—but he continually, spontaneously, asked us fresh questions? Yes, he is indeed a most amiable man, and delightful companion. What a husband he will make! How I wish that you — I forgot what I was going to write, my child; but my memory, never of the best, begins to fail me of late.

Thank Lord Nottingham for all his affec-

tionate kindness to us. Ah, Gusty, why have you left us?

Your letters do not satisfy us; they do not contain those outbursts of happiness that we looked for, to console us for your absence. How is this, my child? Your mother says, that it proceeds from a delicacy on your part, of not appearing *too* happy away from us. And now I remember it, my Gusty, I have often and often wondered why you seemed so very cold to Lord Annandale, just at the last. Was it that you found, when the time of parting drew near, that you loved us better than you had fancied, and could not reconcile your mind to leaving your poor old doting father and mother? Yes! it must have been this thought that caused your sadness. Bless you for it, a thousand times, my heart's darling! I at once suspected this; and, to save you from the pain of separation, I offered Lord Annan-

dale to go up to London at once ; but he, to say the truth, opposed it so much that our pride took the alarm, though often, since, we have wondered why he should have rejected our proposal. Your mother thinks that it was because he wished to have you all to himself, in order to accustom you to live without us. Perhaps it was so. I know not how you, my child, have learned the lesson, but I feel that we have not acquired it.

I promised, when I began this letter, to leave half the paper for your mother ; yet I find I have nearly filled it all, without having said half what my heart dictates to you. Bless you, my precious child, my own Gusty ! prays your fond father,

VERNON.

FROM THE COUNTESS OF VERNON TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

YOUR father has told you, my most beloved Augusta, how sadly we miss you. I try to comfort him, by the prospect of our soon meeting; but my efforts have not been successful. I forgot my own regrets, in endeavouring to sooth his; yet I, too, my precious child, miss your sweet and joyous face every hour, as we miss the sun when his bright beams no longer cheer us. I find myself continually in your room, once so gay, and now so desolate. Your bed, with the pillow on which, from infancy, your dear head has rested—how sad does it make me to look on it now! Your writing-table, your tambour-frame, your harp and piano, all, all remind me that you, the dear presiding spirit which animated them, are far away.

Why is not Lord Annandale a lover of the country, like Lords Delaward and Nottingham? We should then see more of you, and might get reconciled to this separation; but, as it is, it has fallen heavily upon us. I do not neglect your poor pensioners, and I feel an increase of good-will towards all our household from observing how much they sympathise with us in our regret for you. Heaven guard and bless my precious child, prays her fondly attached mother,

FRANCES AUGUSTA VERNON.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

MA CHÈRE DELPHINE, — I was fearful that I should never come in contact with any of the women here most remarkable for their high

moral character, and for a strict decorum of manner peculiar to the *noblesse* of this country before a clumsy imitation and gross exaggeration of continental manners had been adopted. Some, however, of these ladies have been to call on Lady Annandale; and have impressed me with a respect for them, if not with any warmer sentiment. One, the Duchess of Fitzwalter, was announced the other day, when *notre amie la Comtesse Hohenlinden* was reclining in the *bergère*, in the boudoir of Augusta, exhibiting her pretty feet and well-turned ankles to two of her attending *beaux*, by placing them in a more elevated posture than modesty sanctions.

This freedom of manner, this *abandon* and *laissez aller*, so peculiar to *notre frau grafinn*, always brings a blush to the cheek of Augusta; who sits constrained and silent, to the no small amusement of the *comtesse*, who delights in

what she calls shocking her English prudery. I could perceive, by the increased gravity of the Duchess of Fitzwalter's demeanour, that she was more surprised than gratified by finding *notre amie la comtesse* established here so, apparently, at her ease; and I positively saw her cheek grow red as her eyes fell on the exposed ankles so ostentatiously displayed on the *tabouret*.

Notre comtesse, who has discovered that she is in *très mauvaise odeur* with the circle in which the Duchess of Fitzwalter lives, determined, with that recklessness which is one of her distinguishing characteristics, to shock still more the decorum of that lady. We had been conversing on the cholera, and the alarming ravages it is making, previously to the duchess' entrance, and the *comtesse* resumed the subject by saying,—

“ I hope the cholera will increase, for only

fancy how delightful it would be to become at once emancipated from all the absurd conventional restraints of etiquette, and what you, *mesdames*, call decorum! How pleasant it would be to lead a life like that so agreeably described by Boccacio, as having been passed by him and his friends during the *peste* at Florence! Ever since I read it, I have longed to find myself in a similar position."

The Duchess of Fitzwalter absolutely crimsoned, and Augusta became agitated with shame and indignation; while *notre amie* looked archly at her *beaux*, and triumphantly at me, directing our attention to the obvious discomposure of our hostess and her visitor; who, probably, will not seek to cultivate Augusta's acquaintance after this *echantillon* of the society she keeps, for there was a proud reserve in her demeanour, as she withdrew, that indicated some such determination.

The coldness of Augusta's manner towards the *comtesse* irritates the temper, but does not check the levity and coarseness, of that lady, who every where represents her as being *maussade, bête, et stupide*. From all these imputed defects, however, Augusta is far removed; but the position in which she is placed is one so peculiar and embarrassing, that it throws a constraint over the natural vivacity and gracefulness of her manners, and induces the adoption of a reserve and *hauteur* foreign to her disposition.

The extreme youth of Lady Annandale, and her total inexperience of fashionable society, have enabled her lord to usurp the privilege usually granted to all wives—that of selecting their female acquaintance. He encourages the frequent visits of those whose general tone of conversation is the most uncongenial to her taste; and, in truth, I must add, the least

calculated to be advantageous to her morals. Augusta, having no power of excluding such unwelcome guests, entrenches herself in a proud reserve, which, instead of banishing them from her house, produces no other effect than that of unmitigated dislike to her whom they affect to consider and treat as a mere cipher, a spoiled and capricious child, whom, for the sake of her husband, they tolerate.

Her fondness for Lord Annandale's boy they ridicule as the *enticement* of a girl for a new plaything; and her assumption of the gravity and reserve becoming the matronly character, as a whim of the moment. They, none of them, comprehend her: how should they—beholding her only through the false medium of their prejudices, and of their offended vanity? But I, who have seen her in her happy home, the idol of her parents and the friends of her youth, know how warm, how affectionate is

her nature ; and often, in spite of my stoicism, pity her in her present uncongenial position, in which she reminds me of some beautiful flower, transplanted from its native clime, to droop and fade in a less genial atmosphere.

One of your countrywomen, *chère Delphine*, even though only emancipated from her convent or *pension* a week before her marriage, would quickly assume, and pertinaciously retain, the privileges of a *maîtresse de maison*. *Notre comtesse* and her *clique* would soon find themselves excluded from the *salon d'une Française nouvellement mariée*, if they were not suited to her taste, even though they were the dear friends of her husband ; nay, perhaps, this circumstance would, in her mind, be a *raison de plus* for their exclusion.

There is, I observe, a natural tendency to subordination in young Englishwomen, which, had their husbands perception enough to dis-

cover and take advantage of, might save much domestic annoyance. But Englishmen are, for the most part, so totally devoid of tact, and so wholly absorbed in their selfishness, that they seldom adopt a system calculated to give them more than a temporary empire over the minds of their wives, and still more seldom do they use that empire wisely.

*Adieu, belle et bonne! Croyez toujours à
l'amitié de votre*

CAROLINE

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR MORDAUNT,—I have read the publication to which you referred me;* though,

* The letters of Mr. Mordaunt, having little connexion with the conduct of the story, do not appear.

Heaven knows, I never felt less disposed to read, or less capable of judging a grave production, than at present. I agree with you in pronouncing the criticism it contains to be partial and unjust, and think I can guess the writer. There is no surer criterion for judging of a man than by his criticisms. Benevolence is almost always allied to mental superiority, as is malevolence to that species of smartness termed literary acumen, which enables its possessor to detect and exaggerate the faults of a work, while he remains totally insensible to its merits.

A critic gifted with superior mental powers will be more inclined to lenity than severity, because he is above envy ; but one of limited intelligence will ever be prone to depreciate what he cannot equal. Such is the writer of the review in question, who, having failed as an author, avenges his own want of literary

success on his more fortunate contemporaries, reminding one of the truth of the old rhymer's lines,—

“ Authors turn critics when of fame they're foiled,
As wine to vinegar oft turns when spoiled.”

You observed, I am sure, the great importance he attaches to style, which he seems to think more important than matter. Now, I am of opinion, that to pay more attention to the style of an author than to his thoughts, is like regarding a woman for her dress more than for her person. Style, like dress, should be appropriate, and not detract attention from what it was meant to adorn.

You say that you felt disappointed in —— ; that he is less brilliant than his works prepared you to expect to find him. This remark I have heard applied to every literary man of our day ; with what justice I will not stop to inquire.

Has it never occurred to you why it is that we hear so many persons express the disappointment generally felt in the society of authors whose works have afforded them the greatest pleasure? Is it not, that in the works we perused the secret thoughts, the elevated aspirations poured forth in solitude, and addressed to the *minds*, and not to the *ears*, of men? How much more freely can a writer give forth his sentiments to the public, than to his most intimate friends! In perusing a work, we make acquaintance at once with the mind of its creator, free from the constraint imposed by conventional ceremony. We are not influenced by his countenance or manner; by the sound of his voice, or the tie of his cravat; all of which frivolous accessories bias our judgment of him, more or less, however much we may disclaim the humiliating imputation. His works admit us to a familiarity

with his secret thoughts ; we become gratified by finding in ourselves a sympathy with his feelings ; and we quit his productions with self-complacency, because delighted by the discovery of the elevated sentiments they have awakened in us.

We encounter the man who has conferred upon us these benefits : we are surprised and disappointed at finding that he gives us only the ordinary topics of the day ; and even those, perhaps, are delivered with the reserve which the conventions of society impose, or with the flippancy that the exhilaration of gay companionship occasionally produces.

His appearance, manner, or the tone of his voice, is not precisely what we expected ; for people always form an idea of an author, and are apt to be displeased when he is found to be dissimilar to it. The cut of his coat, fashion of his waistcoat, tie of his cravat, or

colour of his gloves, may, as I before said, give offence, and direct against his person the raillery of those who, perhaps, have most loudly praised his works.

Absurd as these remarks may appear, they are, nevertheless, true. Often have I known such unworthy trifles as some of these I have described produce dislike, nay, injustice. An author comes into society, often tired and jaded from writing, to discharge some duty imposed by politeness; or simply to unbend his mind, its force and depth being reserved solely for his study. In his works is seen the profound, but clear stream of his unbroken thoughts; but in society an occasional ripple only is perceived, that but faintly indicates the vigour, the majesty, of the under-current. The conversation of even the most distinguished writer is ever, more or less, influenced by the persons around him; and, like the

chameleon, it too often takes the hue of the nearest object. He adopts, perhaps, this particular tone, not for the purpose of displaying his own thoughts, for they attain publicity through the channel of his writings, but in the idea of suiting the moral calibre and temper of the often uncongenial circle in which he finds himself. Hence the disappointment experienced by those who, having known the author only by his works, find the man, however agreeable or even brilliant, possessed of, seemingly, very disproportioned powers.

I have been writing to you about critics, style, and authors, as if my mind were perfectly at ease : never was it less so, and I have trifled on these subjects to escape from *one* that engrosses every thought, every feeling. Strange that, conscious as I am of the hopelessness, the madness of the passion that consumes me, I cannot conquer it. In flight alone

could I find safety, but I have not fortitude enough to banish myself from her I adore.

I can now sympathise with those who are the prey to an ungovernable affection, and believe all the follies to which it can lead its victims; yet am I more than ever sceptical that any man of honour could, under its influence, betray the woman he really loved, into guilt and shame. I have never, even in the wildest dreams of passion, pictured to myself the possibility of triumphing over her virtue. Nay, more; frail and selfish as is the nature of man, I have never even dared to desire such a result. She, pure and bright as she is, might look with the same pity on the sentiment she has given birth to in my breast, as that which angels are supposed to entertain for those almost idolatrous affections of mortals, which are extenuated, if not redeemed, by their intensity, and freedom from guilt. But never

shall this heart be laid bare to her who rules it; for, if I dare not seek her compassion, I would not incur her contempt, by such an unhallowed avowal.

Ever, my dear Mordaunt,

Sincerely yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
MISS MONTRESSOR.

CHÈRE CAROLINE,—your last letter has given me great pain. How dreadful, that De Carency should have proved himself in every way so vile! How base must that man be, who betrays the errors to which his own duplicity gave birth! I could forgive his betrayal of my indiscretion, as, *grace à Dieu!* I have escaped

all the evil effects to which it might have led ; but, as you are still unmarried, this exposure of the *faiblesse* of your youth may be most mischievous.

I told Florestan, who was furious at the wretch's conduct. He says, that he lately heard that De Carency had been seen in a state of extreme poverty, to which his follies and crimes had reduced him ; that he was wholly abandoned by his family, whom he has disgraced, and was hardly to be recognised : such was the change wrought in him, by the dissolute life he has led. Would to heaven he were dead ! for he is always capable of annoying me, and exposing you, should it suit his plans so to do.

How delightful it must have been, *ma chère*, to have lived in the time of *l'ancien régime*, when it was so easy to procure a *lettre de cachet*, and immure any troublesome person. Fancy

the comfort of shutting up such a man as this, and so effecting two good purposes: the first, that of preventing his giving publicity to the secret he knows; and the second, the precluding him from further disgracing his family. Yes, *those* times were, indeed, infinitely preferable to these, when one cannot shut up even a worthless menial, unless the law so will it. All the privileges and immunities of *la noblesse* are destroyed; and, except for the pleasure of having a coronet emblazoned on one's carriage and plate, there is no advantage to be derived from a title. What a sad state of things!

I like the conduct of your little romantic friend, Lady Annandale, very much, in this affair of the disclosure; for her romanticism seems to spring from the heart, and not the head, *qui fait toute la difference*. I value hers the more, as here, *l'école romantique* is founded on the imagination; it is an effervescence of

sentimentality, that operates not on the affections, nor influences the conduct. With us, the most romantic people are precisely those who have the least real feeling; while, with you, *au contraire*, the romantic seems to spring from the heart.

Such a woman could not be happy, according to *her* notions, with a man like her husband; and half the women in the world, and particularly Englishwomen, will only be happy in their own way, a species of conduct which is—if you, *ma chère*, will permit a very homely comparison—like that of a hungry man, who determines to appease his appetite with certain viands only, which, not being able to procure, he refuses to accept any substitute; or, if he accepts, murmurs at the disappointment. This is a folly peculiar to woman, and betrays a great want of philosophy: but, though I am aware it is a weakness, I pity those who are its victims.

Lady Annandale would require such a man for a husband as you describe Lord Nottingham to be; and, having missed him (a sad mistake!), will probably be consoled by having him for a friend, until she finds that friendship between a beautiful young woman and a highly gifted, sentimental man, is rather a dangerous experiment. She will love him; and, being romanesque, this sentiment, instead of reconciling her to her destiny, will make her more than ever dissatisfied with it. With some women, love and crime seem inseparable. She will first fear him she loves, then herself, and, afterwards, all that seems to encourage the sentiment, until she has rendered her lover unhappy, and herself miserable.

Women like your friend were not born to bestow, or enjoy happiness, except in the legitimate way; consequently, I fear all your schemes will but tend to increase her discomforts, unless

you could persuade her *caro sposo* to die, and so leave her honourably free to wed Lord Nottingham. Even then, I doubt her being happy. She would, the moment her good lord was gathered to his ancestors, begin to find out that she had not been so *aimable* to him as she might have been. Forgetting all his defects, she would magnify her own; endow the dear deceased with all manner of good qualities, and, because she could not love him while he lived, mourn for him, when dead, with an obstinacy that might lead her to shut out the future consolations of a more fortunate union.

I have seen one or two examples of this folly, in women precisely of the same character and temperament as you describe Lady Annandale to possess — people who, not finding it possible to be happy in their own way, refuse to be so in any other. Now, I am one of those practical people who, eager for happiness, or

even its semblance (which often does nearly as well—on the same principle, that the portrait of a lover consoles us, in some degree, for his absence), grasp at every substitute that offers to replace the rarely attainable and unalloyed good. The result is, that I seldom torment others, and never myself.

I wish you could infuse a little of my philosophy into the mind of Lady Annandale, and then all might be well. Nay, I know not, *chère* Caroline, if *you* also have not occasion for some portion of it, notwithstanding your imagined proficiency in the science. Your philosophy is not, I can already begin to perceive, a very practical one; or, if so, is more exercised towards others than self. With all the advantages of travel, and a perfect knowledge of society on the Continent, you have never been able to master the effects of an atrabilarious temperament, peculiar to

your nation, that leads them to view all *en noir*, whenever events begin to turn contrary to their expectations or desires.

A year in the country, with some man who loved you, and whom you loved, with a few romanesque female neighbours, would convert you into a sentimentalist *de la première force*; repenting past errors as if they were crimes of the deepest die, and atoning for them by every future step, with scrupulous goodness: while I, who am a true optimist, would take all things as the inevitable course of events, which, as I could not control, I would support with gaiety. I am aware that I am indebted to my country for the happy mercurial temperament that assists my philosophy; and I am grateful for it. I am interrupted, to examine my dress for a ball to-night.

Toujours à vous,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

MILLE remerciemens, chère Delphine, for the charming robe you have sent me. It reflects honour on your taste, and on the talent of that empress of *couturières*, Victorine, who has surpassed herself on this occasion. This *jolie robe de bal* looks as if made by the touch of the magical wand of some beneficent fairy, for a Cendrillon to figure in. It arrived without being the least *chiffonné*, *grâce à monsieur l'ambassadeur de France*, whose frequent couriers and roomy despatch-bags are very *utiles* to us ladies. Indeed, so frequently have I profited by them of late, that I begin, for the first time, to understand the necessity of having such official dignitaries in our capitals — a necessity I have hitherto rather been inclined to question.

Who was the French writer who called *Ambassadeurs* "the only spies who were openly accredited and respectfully received?"

Apropos des Ambassadeurs, a ci-devant one of France has lately been here, Monsieur le Duc de —; and his reception has been so frigid as to make me feel not a little ashamed of my compatriots. You may remember how enthusiastically he used to speak of *ces chers Anglais, ces bons Anglais, si amicals, si hospitaliers, si prévenans, qui lui étoient tellement attachés et dévoués. Eh bien, ma chère*, would you believe it, *le bon duc* has visited London, no longer an ambassador giving magnificent balls, and *recherché* dinners, as a short time before he had been in the habit of doing, but as a private individual; and in that now rare, but always honourable, position, the faithful friend of a deposed master. You may guess the consequences; *ces chers bons Anglais* have

permitted him to enjoy, unmolested, all the advantages of a strict *incognito*.

“What can we do?” asks one lady, whose doors used to fly open at his approach in the palmy days of his diplomatic splendour. “It is very embarrassing; we see so much of the present ambassador!”

She speaks the truth; her ladyship might say thus of every past, present, and future one who gives *fêtes*.

“The actual people might take it amiss, were we to shew any attention to the *duc*.”

“It really is unpleasant having the *duc* here at this moment,” says another of his *ci-devant* friends.

“It betrays a want of tact under present circumstances,” adds a third.

I have observed, that people who return to a place in altered circumstances are always considered to display this deficiency; and excite

much the same feeling of embarrassment in the minds of their intimates that a dear, deceased, and much-lamented friend would occasion, were he to re-appear on earth some years after those who once wept his loss had become accustomed to it, and to the possession of his property.

Each acquaintance by whom the Duc de — was *fêted* at no distant period, now finds some unanswerable reason for no longer embarrassing him with his attentions; and gets rid of self-reproach for their worldliness, by petulantly censuring the man he has deserted for thus injudiciously testing his past professions of friendship. Perhaps, however, some little excuse may be found for these heartless persons in the frequency of revolutions and changes on the Continent. Here it not unfrequently occurs that the ambassador who gave a *fête* last week, to which all the *élite*

of fashion flocked, is, owing to some alteration of sovereign or government, replaced this week by one of totally opposite politics, who gives his *fêtes* also to the same individuals, and, probably, in the same house. In the mean time his predecessor shrinking into insignificance in some obscure dwelling, anxiously awaits another turn of the wheel of fortune, whose movements have of late become so rapid—owing, probably, to the introduction of railroads—as to baffle all calculation.

Pray, tell me what says the *duc*, and the *Faubourg*, of *ces chers et bons Anglais* at present? But my question, at least, as far as regards *sa seigneurie*, is useless; he is too *comme il faut et digne* to be angry, and too *distract* even to remember what his good and noble heart would fain forget.

My little friend, Lady Annandale, is caught in the wily archer, Love's net, past doubt, and,

I think, past redemption. She may, and probably will, struggle to extricate her heart; but, alas! woman rarely struggles successfully if once fairly caught; and, like a bird ensnared in the toils of a fowler, only entangles herself more in the meshes by her efforts to regain her freedom.

There are moments when I feel so much pity for this lovely and interesting young creature, that I could yet be capable of sacrificing my own schemes to secure her happiness. Ay, you may smile at this declaration, Delphine, knowing how I have steeled my heart against soft emotions since I became the dupe and victim of — a villain. But a woman, though she may, by circumstances, be compelled to enact the *rôle* of *philosophe*, never ceases to retain one of the inherent and indigenous qualities of her sex; and that is, pity. The young expend it on others, and

the sentiment is called love; the old reserve it all for themselves, and it is named selfishness: the change is merely in the object; the principle is, even in the altered state, identical; consequently, I compassionate, and never blame, the egotists we so frequently meet with in society. Could we read the histories of their lives, and trace the events that led to this selfishness, with how many romances, more touching than all those of fiction, should we become acquainted! By how many pangs, occasioned by others, have they been tried! before closing all the portals of the heart, they endeavoured to supply the place of the expelled idols with one equally deceptive and, perhaps, equally unworthy — SELF!

While others love us, while we are necessary to their happiness, we rarely become egotists. Should we not, then, pardon those unhappy beings who, with hearts yearning with affec-

tion, yet finding none to reciprocate it, are compelled to lavish on self that sum of tenderness meant for their fellow-mortals? Is it not this *besoin d'aimer* that reduces elderly maiden ladies to cherish parrots, monkeys, dogs, and cats, and elderly gentlemen to cultivate less innocent attachments? I could be sentimental on this subject; *mais à quoi bon?* you would only smile, or, worse, yawn, over my lucubrations on it; so I will quit them.

Apropos, not de bottes, mais de sentiment, how is *le bon marquis?* Is he still as much *épris* as ever with *madame la comtesse?* and is *madame la comtesse* as much *éprise du collier de perle, et autres belles choses?* But, *reflection faite,* as men *will* be inconstant, even with wives as charming as *ma chère Delphine,* it is, on the whole, fortunate, that his *penchants* have never led him *hors de la bonne compagnie;* as too frequently is the case with some of his contem-

poraries. There is something revolting in the sort of society to which a man is exposed in those *liaisons* with meretricious beauties. Well may it be said that gallantry, like misfortune, brings one acquainted with strange companions. How disgusting to think of the brothers, cousins, and friends, of unknown lives, unguessable professions, and unpronounceable names, to whom he must be civil; and the mothers, aunts, and sisters, to whom he must be polite! Do you not remember with horror the woful change that came over your cousin, the Duc de Harfleur's manners, after he had passed a few months in the society of some favourite sultana of this class? The *laissez aller* of his conversation, interlarded with phrases totally new and incomprehensible to our ears; the indolent lounging, *à la sultan*, on every sofa within his reach, and the *nonchalance* with which he permitted us to ring the bell, pick up our

fans if they dropped, negligent of performing any of the *mille petits services, auprès des dames*, which every well-bred man is too happy to fulfil. Oh, I shall never forget it!

By the by, *chère amie*, you would be not a little shocked, could you but witness the free-and-easy style of the men of fashion here. It positively amounts to insolence; yet they do not mean it. No, they only mean to be at *their* ease; but this precludes any well-bred woman from feeling at *hers*, in their society. They are at once *nonchalant* and familiar; make no ceremony of talking of the House of Commons, the political questions of the day, their hunting or shooting, or, in fact, all that peculiarly concerns themselves; rarely, if ever, introducing those topics which are generally supposed to be most agreeable to women.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden told me, that

here the ladies are obliged to study the tastes and pursuits of the gentlemen, in order to find favour in the eyes of those lords of the creation. Is not this a dreadful degradation to our sex? Only fancy women talking of horses, and not only talking of, but visiting them in their stables! Fancy their betting, and keeping books in which are entered not *les douces pensées des dames*, but the wagers they have made, and the odds *pour et contre!* This would not be believed in France; *mais c'est un fait, je vous jure.*

Here, a lady who wishes to captivate, relies, not on her charms, but on her tact, and the weakness to which it is to be opposed. Is the man who is to be won a politician?—she reads all his speeches, an operation painful and impracticable to all save one impelled by a predominant motive. She does more,—she succeeds in remembering some portions of them,

and quotes them with eulogium ; when, unless he is the most ungrateful of his sex, she is rewarded by his preferring her to all things save himself and his speeches.

The only chance of defeat consists in the number of competitors for his favour.

If a man is devoted to hunting, the ladies who wish to please him are suddenly struck with admiration for that amusement. " They dote on horses ;" they delight in driving to the cover-side ; they pat the necks of the " beautiful animals," and praise the red coats of their masters. Nay, examples have been known of their donning scarlet habits, and risking their necks, to attract some coveted Nimrod.

If a man be fond of theatricals, then each lady who aspires to win him is dying to act too. She discovers that the amateur far excels the best actor on the stage. His tragic acting is so affecting (affected, she means) ; and, having

persuaded him that *he* is the only Romeo alive, she hopes to be selected as his Juliet.

Military men are courted, by the female aspirants flocking to reviews, and doting on martial music. Yachters are vanquished by delicate women, who tremble at the bare idea of a storm, and turn pale at a high wave, declaring, that "they are nowhere so happy as at sea;" that "a yacht is infinitely preferable to a house, and a sailor's life the most agreeable thing in the world, except that of being his wife."

It is thus that ladies in England administer to the weaknesses of the "sterner sex," and subjugate them (*apropos* of the word subjugate, a man said, two days ago, that subjugate and conjugate were synonymous); while you, in *la belle* France, exact that deferential homage which is woman's due, and to which she cannot resign her claims, without being guilty of a want of respect towards

her whole sex. I attribute the *mauvaise manière* of the Englishmen of fashion to the want of dignity of the women.

The long war took so many men away, that, owing to their scarcity, they became more in demand, and the claimants were so numerous, that the claimed grew saucy. This, I imagine, first led to the unnatural system of the men being courted instead of courting; a practice to which they have now become so used, that I know not how it is ever to be eradicated. A French *grisette* would expect — ay, and exact, too — more attention than a London fine lady dreams of meeting from the men of her circle.

Am I not a voluminous, if not a luminous correspondent? One thing I am sure I am, and that is, *chère* Delphine's affectionate friend,

CAROLINE MONTRESSOR.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
MISS MONTRESSOR.

YOUR *apperçu* of the peculiarities in the manners and customs of your country, *chère* Caroline, interests me exceedingly, though it excites in me no desire to become a denizen *de l'Angleterre*. I was not prepared to expect such a total want of *retenue* in the circle denominated, *par excellence*, fashionable.

The English, who never do any thing by halves, have, it appears, exaggerated our French freedom and ease *de société*, just as barbarously as they do our *modes*; which they so caricature, that Herbault declares he never can recognise the original model of the *chefs-d'œuvre* he sends to your metropolis, in the vile imitations of them which he sees on some *dame Anglaise*, who, fresh from her native isle, visits his magazine.

Liberty has degenerated into license with the society you describe—not an unusual event : but this is an evil that carries its own remedy ; for license is always certain, sooner or later, to produce a reaction, as well in morals as in politics. I should, consequently, not feel surprised at hearing, in a few years, that the *violation des bienséances et de la pudeur des mœurs* which you mention, has led to a revolution, or reformation, re-establishing in England a puritanical severity of manners similar to that which marked the times of the Protector Cromwell.

I have such a dislike to revolutions, that I would deprecate any thing that tends to produce them. They are like earthquakes, which, if they overthrow what is faulty, also destroy much that is good ; I, therefore, regret the indecencies that sully your society, because they will, probably, lead to a subversion of

manners quite as disagreeable as the present are objectionable.

There are certain anomalies in English manners, that strike me as being very revolting. I refer to the odious publicity of actions for breaches of conjugal fidelity. With us, husbands are too sufficiently humiliated by a suspicion of the bad conduct of their wives, and shrink from taking any step to prove it. Thus, it never amounts to more than a suspicion, which extends no further than their own immediate circle; and the suspected individuals so conduct themselves in society, that no symptom of indecorous familiarity is ever apparent. Hence, public decency is not violated; and, consequently, public morals are not outraged, however private ones may be sometimes compromised.

With you, how different is the case! An injured husband in England gives publicity to

his wife's shame, and his own dishonour: he uncovers his domestic wounds as beggars do their sores; perchance to excite pity sometimes, but disgust *always*. To prove the injury he has sustained, he must furnish evidence of the affection his unhappy wife felt for him previously to her dereliction from virtue. Thus, the sacred privacy of conjugal love is unveiled before the profane and gloating eyes of that many-headed monster denominated "*the public*." Sentiments of affection, and terms of endearment, become by-words of the coarsest raillery in the mouths of the lowest and grossest rabble. Revolting details of facts demonstrative of the criminality of the accused are not only proclaimed in court, but published in your journals; until all England and the Continent are convinced that the husband is what, with us, a husband would rather die than avow himself to be; and his wife, the

mother of his innocent children, is branded with the searing iron of ignominy.

How a proud man, or a man of honour, can thus expose himself, seems wonderful; and yet such examples occur continually with you. Yours is essentially a commercial country; and every thing, however sacred, even to the affections, are viewed with a reference to this national peculiarity.

Is a husband wounded in the tenderest point, the honour of his wife, he seeks redress by an action against her seducer; and, if he establishes her guilt, and his own shame, the law adjudges him what is considered the full value of both, mulcted from the purse of the paramour.

Are a fond parent's hopes for ever blighted by the seduction of his daughter, he appeals to the law for redress. His child's frailty, previously known but to a few, is proclaimed to

the world ; a stain is for ever attached to her name : but the father receives the price at which her virtue was estimated.

Is a young and innocent girl disappointed in her virgin affections by some false youth who had won them, and sought her hand — she flies *not* to solitude to weep over his broken vows, and her too fond credulity, but to the next lawyer, to bring an action against the deceiver for a breach of promise of marriage! She then displays every line “ the false one ” ever wrote to her ; repeats every protestation of love he ever uttered ; and seeks to recover a pecuniary compensation as a salve for her wounded heart.

Confess, *ma chère* Caroline, that the examples I have quoted of the commercial habits of your compatriots prove little for the delicacy of their feelings ; and, prone as we are, in our Anglomania, to adopt your customs, I do not

think those to which I have alluded are ever likely to become popular in France.

Madame ma mère has lately given us much inquietude by having become a devotee, and placed herself under the guidance of a certain Père Maubois; a Jesuit more remarkable for a covetousness of the good things of this world than for a conduct likely to ensure those of the next. I fear he may induce her to make a will in his favour; but any *exposé* of his real character, on our parts, would only tend to render her more disposed towards him, as she is more self-willed and obstinate than ever.

Adieu, ma chère Caroline! je vous embrasse. Votre affectionnée

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

I AM *au désespoir*, chère Delphine, at hearing that *le pauvre* Florestan has been so imprudent. I always knew Madame de Heautforte to be *un peu bête*, but I did not suspect her of the folly of encouraging *votre mari's* propensity to extravagance, or still less of the meanness of profiting by it.

This is a *triste affaire*, and may become very embarrassing in its consequences; for Florestan, with an excellent heart, has not the wisest possible head. And so, *madame la duchesse*, *votre mère*, has become a devotee, *la dernière ressource* of coquettes, who give themselves to God when men slight them. If, indeed, she took to religion, it would be fortunate; but,

unhappily for France, bigotry too often usurps the place of devotion there. I like not the influence le Père Maubois has acquired over her—*mais quoi faire?* My plan would be, to praise him extravagantly to her; for, prone as she is to opposition, this may induce her to take the other side of the question, and ultimately render her disgusted with him.

The newspapers have commenced commenting on Lord Nottingham's marked attention to Lady Annandale. Their *liaison* is announced as an established fact, though neither of them have, I dare say, ever contemplated such a *dénoûment* to their romantic passion.

Augusta will, probably, never see these statements, for she detests scandal too much ever to look into those journals where it may be found; and her adorer, Lord Nottingham, has an equal aversion from it: consequently, their names may be coupled together, and

the most injurious insinuations relative to them circulated about this overgrown metropolis, while they remain in total ignorance of the amusement which such statements afford to their friends, and the triumph it furnishes to their enemies.

Lord Annandale will not, however, be left long in a similar state of ignorance on the subject. Some half dozen dear friends, who cannot bear that a man should not know whatever must inflict pain, will write him anonymous letters to apprise him of his supposed dishonour. They will, probably, send him the paragraphs that announce the mortifying intelligence; and his is precisely the character to be most irritated by this publicity, because his vanity is more intense than his love, and infinitely more vulnerable.

Lord Annandale would have been a good man, had he not lived too much in the heart-

less circle which has demoralised his principles and blunted his better feelings; leaving his *amour propre*, with its inordinate cravings for indulgence, sole arbiter of his own actions, and the sole criterion by which he judges the conduct of others. The woman who would administer to his vanity might not only rule him despotically, but would find in him a kind and affectionate friend; for his disposition is good, and his nature grateful: but she who wounded this omnipotent passion would lose all influence over him, and meet a severe censor and an implacable judge.

Augusta's visible indifference has deeply mortified him; and so soured his opinion of her character, that he will be prone to give ear to charges against her which, had she conciliated, instead of wounding his vanity, he would not for a moment entertain.

This state of their relative feelings and po-

sitions assists my project ; and the conviction that Lady Annandale never would be likely to feel an affection for her lord, nor to enjoy felicity in her union with him, reconciles me to the scheme of dissolving the ill-assorted marriage ; and of securing for myself the husband who cannot form her happiness, and whose happiness she, certainly, does not constitute.

Whenever a qualm of conscience intrudes, to suggest a doubt whether the means I employ to accomplish the end I aim at be justifiable, I sooth it by mental vows to be so good and irreproachable, when I have gained the goal, that I shall atone for the sins committed by the way.

Is it not thus, that all who do wrong silence “ the still small voice of conscience ? ” for no one, I do believe, was ever yet so obdurate of heart as to meditate a perpetual perseverance

in crime. *Helas!* do I not resemble him who, plunged in guilt, declared that, when he had acquired a certain sum, he would forsake his evil ways, and turn honest?

I am interrupted, and can only add, that, whether faulty or good, I shall be always,

Chère Delphine,

Your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

MA CHÈRE DELPHINE,—I owe you a *dédommagement* for the abstruse essay, *sur les mœurs Anglais*, I inflicted on you in my last letter; and shall, therefore, treat you with lighter matter in this.

“The fashionable world,” to use the phrase of the papers, has been thrown into a state of agreeable excitement by the unusual occurrence of a *bal costumé*, which has put into requisition all the *modistes*, *couturières*, and jewellers, of this vast metropolis. Travellers have been consulted, books of costumes referred to, and all, save the means of furnishing the dresses, been taken into grave consideration.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden has been the presiding patroness of this *fête*; and at her house, *les dames les plus à la mode* have met frequently, to consult, demur, and decide, on the momentous subject of their dresses.

Lady Acid, who has gained a reputation for *wit* on the strength of extreme *ill-nature* — which, *entre nous soit dit*, in London is continually mistaken for it — declares that, in a moral point of view, *bals costumés* should be encouraged here, as they compel many ladies

to think of *character* who had long forgotten the advantages of such a possession!

“How novel it must be to several of my friends,” said Lady Acid, “to have a character even for one night!”

“Why, after all,” said Lord Charles Brettville, “they have done so long, and so well, without such an appendage, that it would be now as useless as the long-exploded pockets.”

“How many hearts,” drawled out the sentimental Mrs. Coningsby, “beat quicker now, in the anticipation of conquests to be achieved, or chains to be riveted, or truant admirers to be regained ——”

“Or female friends to be mortified!” interrupted Lady Acid.

“I shall go as a Venetian lady,” said the Marchioness of Eiderdown, “because it will enable me to wear the whole of my jewels.”

“ The only occasions on which she is brilliant,” whispered Lady Acid in my ear.

“ I shall go as a shepherdess,” lisped Lady Simper.

“ Because the dress will display at once the smallness of her waist, and of her wit,” added Lady Acid again.

“ I shall go as a Swiss peasant,” said Lady Mellicent.

“ To shew her legs,” rejoined her friend, Lady Acid.

“ I have chosen a Greek dress,” observed Lady Rawlinson.

“ And not ill chosen, either,” whispered Lady Acid, “ if all we hear of her gaming propensities be true.”

“ I mean to personate a Magdalen,” said Mrs. Walton, “ with my hair falling on my shoulders.”

“Are you not afraid of people’s thinking the character too appropriate?” asked her last discarded admirer.

“My dress shall be that of a Roman empress,” said Lady Easy.

“Messalina, I suppose,” whispered Lady Acid.

“In what character shall I go?” asked Lord Wellingford.

“In that of the Careless Husband,” replied Lady Acid.

“And you, Mr. Milner,” demanded another, “what character will you personify?”

“The Poor Gentleman,” whispered Lady Acid.

“The report, then, is true,” said Lady Rawlinson, “that Mr. Milner is ruined, and lives by his wits.”

“As to the being ruined, I believe it is true

enough," answered Lady Acid; "but the living by his wits I hold to be impossible, for the capital is too small to allow interest enough to support even a mouse."

"Observe Wellingford," said Mr. Milner; "how conceited he looks! he thinks himself a perfect Adonis."

"Poor fellow! though no Adonis, he may yet share the same fate," replied Lady Acid,— "that of being destroyed by a *bore* — if he should be again condemned to a *séjour* in the country, *tête-à-tête* with his wife."

"Only look at Mrs. Tylney — how dreadfully dull she is! never are her lips opened but to utter a *bêtise*," observed Lord Charles Fitzhardinge.

"I should forgive her that, if she did not, also, in opening them, display teeth even more disgusting than the stupid speeches she utters,"

said Mr. Milner; "but bad teeth there is no forgiving."

"Why is Lady Overton's face like a solicitor's desk?" asked Mr. Harcourt.

"Oh, spare us your conundrums and puns, I beseech you," said Lady Acid.

"Do you give it up?" asked the inveterate punster, red with anger at Lady Acid's interruption; "why, because it is full of indentures!"

"Dreadful! shocking!" uttered half a-dozen voices; "really, Mr. Harcourt, you should give over puns."

"How gay Lady Georgiana Spencer looks!" observed Lord Charles Fitzhardinge.

"Gay!" interrupted Lady Acid; "she is, *au contraire*, disposed to be *triste* at this moment; but, recollecting that her fine teeth, the only attraction she possesses, must be displayed,

she assumes that everlasting smile. On the same principle, Lady Emily Harrowfield, though naturally a very lively person, takes especial care never to smile, lest she should exhibit her front tooth, which is defective."

This, *chère* Delphine, is a specimen, and not an exaggerated one, of the sort of jargon that usurps the place of conversation in the exclusive circle in London; where ill-nature and dulness reign, and where the most certain mode of making people feel pleased with us, that of rendering them pleased with themselves, is less understood than in any other part of the civilised world. In France, satire often proceeds less from ill-nature than from the desire of displaying wit; but here, as there is little wit to be shewn, the ill-nature must be the paramount motive. With you Lady Acid would not be tolerated; she would

be denominated a *mauvaise langue*, and to her would be applied, and in truth with justice, the French verses,—

“ Si elle n'eut mal parlé de personne,
On n'eut jamais parlé d'elle.”

My countrywomen are not at all prone to pay compliments to each other. Here you never hear any of the thousand civil speeches that pass between ladies in France, which, even though wanting in sincerity, possess a certain charm; as flattery, if judiciously administered, is always acceptable, however much we may despise the flatterer. I call flattery the oil of society, which protects from rust the hinges that sustain it. In England this oil is deficient; and, consequently, the grand machine often creaks and jars. It is only men who flatter women here; and, though their object is an interested one, their strata-

gem is generally crowned with success; probably, in consequence of the rarity of its employment. These calculating and insidious parasites might, on such occasions, repeat the old verse,—

“ I treat her with gentle good-humour, that she,
In return, may be more than good-humoured to me.”

Now, in France a woman is told every day, by every female friend she sees, that she is *belle comme un ange, jolie comme un cœur, faite à ravir—et mille autres choses de ce genre*. She is, consequently, neither delighted nor overwhelmed with gratitude when men address to her similar assurances; and, therefore, the flattery is less dangerous to females with you than with us, and examples of feminine friendships more numerous.

I have nowhere seen so many ridiculous people as among the fashionable circles in

which I live here, and, at the same time, people so little amusing. In Italy and France one feels half disposed to pardon *les gens ridicules*, because they make one laugh; but here there is a gravity, a pretension in their folly, that excites a less agreeable emotion than mirth. On the Continent, the class to which I refer is composed of originals, harmless mono-maniacs, whose singularity is diverting. But here it consists of persons, who, being only doomed by nature to be commonplace, sigh for notoriety, and seek it by the only road known to them — affectation.

Lady Jerviscourt aspires to be considered a *bas bleu*, without even a knowledge of orthography; Lord Armytage sets up for a critic, without the power of comprehending one out of every dozen books he peruses; Mr. Radcliffe talks politics all day, though, except to cry “hear, hear!” his voice, luckily for the mem-

bers, was never heard in the House of Commons ; and Mr. Robertson sets up for a wit, by repeating all the bad puns he has ever heard, and spoiling half the good stories. Mrs. Addington votes herself a beauty, though nature has refused to sign her patent ; Mr. Hutchinson believes himself a man of gallantry, because he stares every woman he meets out of countenance ; and Mrs. Thomas Henry Allingham thinks herself a second Sappho, since she has dressed her hair *à la Greque*, and had some of her lame verses set to music by a distressed teacher of that art.

“ Mais l'audace est commune, et le bon sens est rare,
Au lieu d'être stupide, souvent on est bizarre.”

*Adieu, ma chère Delphine ! aimez toujours
votre*

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

How I wish you were in London, *ma chère* Delphine, for a month or two, to enjoy with me the incongruities of the strange *clique* with which I find myself surrounded! They really are unique in their indefatigable pursuit of pleasure, and in the signal unsuccessfulness of the chase.

I should be much more amused by them, had I some one on the spot to whom I could make my observations; but here there is not a soul, except *notre frau gräfinn*, and she is not *spirituelle* enough to perceive *les petits ridicules* which are to me so amusing.

But to quit general society, and to return to that of which I form one. My little friend, Lady Annandale, is making a great fool of herself. She has taken it into her head

that she will turn *réformateur des mœurs à Londres*, never dreaming of the Herculean task she has imposed upon herself. Easier would it be, tenfold, to cleanse the Augean stables, than to purify the morals of those with whom her husband chooses she should live. She objects to associating with ladies whose reputations are not spotless, (to what a limited circle must she, then, confine herself!) and is absurd enough to fancy that rank and fashion are not excuses for vice.

But the best of all is, that, while thus harsh to ladies whose characters have so long been attacked by atrophy that they are wasted almost to a state of invisibility, she is exhibiting herself so continually with Lord Nottingham, that, ere long, her own character bids fair to be problematical. He rides with her every day in the park, — that is, he rides with *us*; but I always take care to get either before or

behind them, with any second beau of the party, and so leave Lady Annandale, who is unconscious of the manœuvre, *tête-à-tête* with her *preux chevalier*.

He accompanies us to all the places which we frequent, and naturally finds himself by her side; while she, nothing loath, listens, with pleased ears, to the praises of her dear Lord and Lady Delaward, or those of her more dear *père et mère*, whom Lord Nottingham affects to love and reverence. Already people begin to regard them with significant looks and smiles, the *avant couriers* of graver and more injurious comments.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden, piqued at Lady Annandale's reserve and coldness towards her, encourages malicious remarks; and I foresee that, some fine day, while dreaming of virtue, and believing that she is to restore it to this modern Babel, Lady Annandale will find her-

self precisely in the category of those ladies whom she so severely reprehends, and whom she would fain exclude from her circle ; while they, of course, would rejoice in her downfall.

Every hour's experience proves to me how little chance a portionless *demoiselle* has of obtaining a *bon parti* in England ; and my *dernière ressource* is to convert Lady Annandale into the Marchioness of Nottingham, and your friend, into the Countess of Annandale.

I am thus serving three people, at least, if not four : myself, for self should always be the first object served ; my young friend, Augusta, for a friend should come after self ; Lord Nottingham, who, if my plans succeed, will obtain a charming woman, with whom, I am convinced, he is passionately in love ; and Lord Annandale, who, instead of a *romanesque, tête montée* wife, who feels only indifference towards him, will possess a — what shall I say ? — but

no, one cannot decently praise one's self ; so I leave you to finish the sentence.

The truth is, that, vanity apart, I do think that, as he is a vain and ambitious man, I should be to him a more suitable wife than Augusta. She is too high-souled, too poetical, to enact that part which his fashionable tastes, and diplomatic tendencies, require : but I, who know the world, use its slaves for my purposes, while they imagine they are working their own.

Lord Annandale begins to be *ennuyé* by the obsolete fastidiousness of *madame son épouse*, relative to her associates ; and, though he will not permit her to exclude them from his house, he cannot compel her to treat them otherwise than with a cold and repulsive ceremony, highly offensive to the guests and to the host. I rather encourage than thwart her folly on this point, because it facilitates my own

plans. The seclusion she prefers throws her more into habits of familiarity with Lord Nottingham; makes him more in love with her every hour; and, if I mistake not, begins to excite in her breast an incipient passion, which will acquire irresistible force before she becomes aware of its existence: for few English children, and *no* French ones, were ever so pure, and innocent, as is this woman.

I do believe — and you know I am not prone to place implicit faith in female purity, or firmness of purpose — that, were Augusta to discover that the sentiment she entertains for Lord Nottingham is of a warmer nature than friendship, she would shun his presence, and seek safety against her own feelings in flight.

My plan is not to alarm her sensitiveness by the least hint, or slightest caution, until she finds herself the universal topic of scandal; her husband believing her guilty; society, as is

usual on such occasions, taking his part, and expelling her from its pale, with the consciousness, in her secret heart, that, though innocent of actual crime, or even a thought of guilt, she loves Lord Nottingham.

To whom, then, but to him, can she turn? She has never cared for the gay world, or taken any pleasure in the society that we consider its greatest attraction. The sense of innocence will console her for any annoyance the publicity of the legal proceedings may produce; and, the divorce obtained, she will become the wife of the man she loves:—no bad exchange for being that of one she neither loved nor respected.

You ask me how all this can be effected without some demonstration of guilt? but nothing is so facile. I have previously explained to you how easily a woman's reputation is sacrificed in London, where "*ce n'est pas la*

faute qui est punie—c'est le bruit qu'elle fait. Les plus bruyantes sont ordinairement les plus légères fautes, et les plus fortes sont les plus silencieuses."

It would require only a little address to satisfy Lord Annandale that he is a wronged husband, because Augusta has indisposed him towards her by her undisguised indifference. His outraged vanity would avenge her coldness by a severity ruinous to her reputation ; and an appearance of criminality is easily given, which would justify her husband in resorting to legal proceedings.

You see I have already made myself *au fait* of the *rôle* I intend to enact : wish success to your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

You ask me, *chère* Delphine, to give you an *apperçu* of the leading peculiarities that distinguish our islanders from your volatile compatriots ; and of the great influence exercised on society here by that undefined, yet despotic power, fashion. I therefore send you a crude sketch, as a sort of equivalent and repayment for your very interesting story ; and you must accept the promptitude with which I comply with your request more as a proof of my desire to gratify you, than of my power of performing the task.

LONDON FASHIONABLE SOCIETY.

AMONG the numerous peculiarities of the English, is an extreme susceptibility with regard

to any criticism on their habits, manners, and customs; and an inveterate indignation against the individuals who are so hardy as to attempt it. If any foreigner, not *très répandu dans la société* here, writes his sentiments on the country, he is proclaimed to be *un ignorant*, full of presumption, whose opinions are unworthy of notice; but if he *has* been *très répandu*, all the vials of wrath are emptied on his luckless head. To describe what he has seen, is pronounced to be a most indelicate breach of propriety and hospitality. To say that the heavy magnificence of aristocratic dinners sometimes imposes a constraint on the guests, is, for a man who has dined with Lords A, B, and C, an indecent violation of *les bienséances*; and to note down that *soirées* of three, four, and five hundred persons, in rooms comparatively small, are not agreeable, is an outrage of all *les convenances* in the favoured

person who has been seen jammed in the doorways, or scrambling on the stairs, at the houses of any of the ladies of fashion to which an *entrée* is considered a distinction.

When personalities are introduced, which I admit to be always objectionable, every one is up in arms. The praised think themselves not sufficiently so; the unnoticed consider themselves aggrieved; and the censured, however slightly the ferule may be applied, are outrageous. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that the books, hitherto published, descriptive of English manners, have been defective. The penalty certain to follow a successful portraiture of them will always be likely to deter the attempt; except by some amateur like myself, who exhibits *les ridicules de la société pour s'amuser*, or to amuse a friend.

To describe all that I see here, *il faut être*

Anglais; for no foreigner can penetrate the mysteries of the *coteries* and *cliques* into which society is divided, without having lived some years in the country, and been initiated into its artificial systems. *Your* compatriots, who come here for a few weeks, form the most erroneous opinions of *mine*. Beholding only the surface, they describe, and not always correctly, that of which they had opportunities of judging only superficially, as if they had penetrated all the most secret intricacies of the great machine. Hence, their pictures are never true to the life; but resemble portraits painted from the reflected image of the originals in mirrors — shadows of a shade.

The English are so pre-eminently egotistical, that they regard all foreigners as intruders in their society. Persons who are not *au courant* of the subjects of the day; who know nothing of the loves and hatreds

of each *clique*, the *brouilleries*, scandalous stories, and ridicule, of the individuals who compose them; and who comprehend not the insinuations and *demi-mots* of those around them, cannot be considered otherwise than a bore by a real fashionable of the exclusive circle.

It is true the stranger may be a man of genius, of versatile and brilliant powers of conversation, who has seen much, and reflected more: but what care those with whom he now finds himself? They think only of themselves and their own narrow circle; and all who are not *au fait* of its mysteries are voted *de trop*. To be sure, they sometimes extend their favour to strangers who come in the unquestionable shape of a prince, a *diplomate renommé*, or a *littérateur* of acknowledged reputation. These are received as lions in the great menagerie of fashion; they are fed and stared at, and serve

to lengthen the list of guests published in the *Morning Post* every day, with a due attention to styles and titles. If they remain only a short time in London, they depart in the belief that its polished inhabitants are the most hospitable people in the world, and that its circles present one continued and brilliant *fête*. Little do they imagine that their reputation, and not their merit, procured this flattering attention! Are they drawn out in conversation on the subjects in which they have acquired distinction? Does any one betray the least interest or curiosity relative to them, their pursuits — past, present, or to come — or the impressions they have received in the, to them, novel scenes around? No. When their names have been blazoned forth in all the papers as having dined at L—— House, dejeuner at D—— House, and supped at S—— House, the usual number of times, and their faces

have been sufficiently seen in the heterogeneous crowd styled the fashionable world, people, who stared at them at first, from the curiosity excited by the published programme of their claims to distinction, get accustomed to "the odd-looking man with the brown wig, and the star;" or the "ill-dressed one with a decoration in his button-hole;" or "the man with spectacles and a bald head, who looks so stupid," and think no more of them.

If, however, some Curtius of society magnanimously sacrifices himself for half an hour by throwing himself into the gulf of conversation with any of these exotic worthies, he takes a malicious pleasure in mystifying them; by nodding assent to the expression of their erroneous opinions, and dissenting, by a well-bred shrug or deprecating shake of the head, from those they had with more justice adopted, but which happen not to be in har-

mony either with his prejudices or his love of mischief.

The enlightened stranger now discovers, that the orator whose eloquence had excited admiration abroad is little esteemed at home; because he is viewed through the false prism of opposite politics: that the author whose works have been as enthusiastically commended as universally read in other countries, is undervalued in his own, because his hair curls; or because he dresses too much or too little in the fashion (either of which crimes furnish a sufficient cause for decrying him), or wears yellow gloves, or commits some other equally offensive error. In short, the reputations that, on the Continent, have been stamped by the approval of all the men of genius, which France, Germany, and Italy can boast, are depreciated in the land that gave birth to their possessors; and the truth of the old proverb, that "no

prophet is esteemed in his own country," is no where so perfectly or frequently verified as in England.

I have described the reception given to foreign lions in London: let me now state that given to strangers with less claims to attention.

A foreigner arrives with letters of introduction; or, in other words, certificates of birth, parentage, and — not education. He delivers them at the houses to which they are addressed, and, in return, receives a soup-ticket, *bon pour un jour*.

"What a horrid bore to have this man thrown on our hands!" says *Madame la maitresse de maison*; "his aunt was so *prévenante* for us at Versailles, that we must be civil to him. What is to be done with him?"

"Ask him to dinner, to be sure," replies *Monsieur le mari*.

“ But whom can one get to meet him ? ” demands *Madame*, with an air of chagrin and embarrassment ; “ people dislike so much meeting foreigners, until they are, at least, somewhat broken into our habits.”

“ Let me see : oh, yes — the Heberdens have been passing the winter at Paris ; they, probably, know him ; at all events, the gaieties of the Parisian season will furnish them with a subject in common. Yes, we’ll engage the Heberdens.”

“ Here is a letter and a card from le Comte de Bellechasse,” exclaims Lady Grandison. “ How tiresome ! what is to be done with him ? His mother was so civil to us at Paris, that we must be attentive to him.”

“ Send him a ticket for our box at the opera, mamma,” says Lady Anna-Maria.

“ And a card for our ball on Friday,” lisps Lady Georgina.

“ But if, through not knowing London usages, he should become a fixture in the box ?” soliloquises mamma.

“ But even if he should, mamma, ours is, you know, a double box, and ——”

“ We have always plenty of spare room for a *beau*, you would add—*n'est-ce pas*, Anna-Maria? Well, there is one advantage in a double box,” continues Lady Grandison, “ it enables one to return civilities cheaply.”

“ Yes,” answers Lady Georgina, “ a double box at the opera is nearly as cheap a mode of returning civilities in London, as the sending tickets for the Chapelle is Royale, at Paris. Do you remember how we were inundated with them ?”

The poor foreigner receives the invitations, the necessity of giving which has caused so much embarrassment to the hospitable donors. After a dinner at each of the houses, to the pro-

prietors of which he has brought letters of credence, he is engaged to make one of a party to Greenwich. Thither he, with some difficulty, finds his way on the appointed day. Having duly admired the exterior of the hospital, and refrained from expressing his disapprobation of the exhalations arising from the mud, observing that the ladies do not object to them, his olfactory nerves are regaled with the mingled odours of fried fish within doors, and the fume of tobacco without. Such are some of the *agrémens* of this interesting excursion : and at last, fit termination, the bill being demanded, the luckless foreigner finds that, for the refined enjoyment he has been *invited* to partake, he has a sum to pay that would have defrayed the expenses of a month in the land of his birth.

This is another cheap mode of returning civilities peculiar to London : cheap only to

the inviters, however; for, to the accepters, it is rather a costly purchase.

The poor man returns, half dead, to his lodging, determined to eschew white-bait, cider-cup, and pink champagne, while he lives. After three days' suffering, and an apothecary's bill even longer than the Greenwich one, he is able to shew himself once more. How you would pity the unfortunate victim, could you behold the lodging in which he has passed those three days, knowing, as you do, how luxurious is the accommodation of the apartment of a Frenchman *comme il faut!* No longer does he inhabit a spacious and lofty suite elegantly furnished; or an *entresol*, whose tasteful decoration and comfort are so inviting. Behold him in a small room, three parts of which are occupied by a four-post bed sufficiently large to contain half a dozen persons; this same bed piled with mattresses;

of a colour and texture alone sufficient to banish sleep, but crowned by a feather-bed that defies it. The drapery has become of a nondescript hue, from its long intimacy with the smoky atmosphere, of which the fringe has amply partaken. The light enters by one small window, which commands a view of the house-tops, gutters, chimney-pots, and back-windows, of the parallel street — an enlivening prospect for a solitary invalid! The paper that covers the walls of this chamber has been chosen with a judicious recollection of the smoky tendency of the chimney, and is in perfect keeping with the curtains of the bed and windows. A convex mirror, an ornament peculiar to English lodging-houses, graces the wall, crowned by an eagle who has lost one wing; yet, as though its escape from its captivity were still apprehended, continues to hold in its beak divers chains of brass, that

fall gracefully back to the frame. One look in such a mirror is always sufficient to disgust the vainest man with his own physiognomy. The hall of this abode is generally occupied by three or four foreign couriers smoking cigars; and the house breathes of the united perfumes of soup, garlic, and *gruyère* cheese. The mansion stands in some populous street or square, in a district rarely visited except by foreigners, who seem to have a predilection for such places, and are ignorant of how vulgar they are considered to be; but, being kept by Frenchmen or Italians, their compatriots imagine they will be less extravagantly charged, if less comfortably lodged.

You will naturally wonder how I can have acquired a knowledge of such an abode as the one I have described; but your wonder will cease when I tell you that it was precisely in such a one that I found *la pauvre* Comtesse

de Mellancourt recovering from the effects of her sea-voyage, and lamenting her fate in being so lodged. Had I not informed her, that comfort, and elegance too, might be found in a London hotel, she would have submitted to her fate, and have returned to Paris exclaiming against the *mal propreté, et manque de tous les agrémens, des auberges Anglaises*. But Lord Anandale kindly recommended her to one where she did nothing but admire *l'extrême propreté, et le tapis de l'escalier*; which last household adornment, I observe, never fails to excite the admiration of your country men and women.

A dinner at Richmond follows the convalescence of the unfortunate foreigner, whose lodging I described; where muddy eels, cutlets—such as are never seen out of England—ducks, that taste more of fish than do the eels, and peas, that “have fallen into the sere and yellow leaf,” tempt his delicate appetite: and for this

luxurious fare he has also to pay, though invited, a sum that would have furnished the most *recherché* dinner at Lointiers, or the Rocher de Cancalles. Do you not pity your compatriot, *ma chère* Delphine?

Read this description to Florestan, who has such brilliant notions of the advantages to be enjoyed here: but tell him, also, that to the stranger who comes with a well-filled purse, Thomas's Hotel, the Clarendon, Grillon's, and some others, offer comforts not to be despised even by his and your fastidious taste.

A London season resembles the Saturnalia of Rome; during which, though a perfect liberty is professed to be allowed, the chains of the bondsmen are heard to rattle even while they dance. All here are slaves: yes, positive slaves, and to the most tyrannical of all sovereigns — Fashion. Does it not appear absurd that *la mode*, which you in France control, and use

as an *accessoire* to your pleasures, we English elevate into a despot? who, like all despots, avenges on his subjects the weakness that led to his elevation, by depriving them of all volition, or, at least, all exercise of it. Endless are the sacrifices this Juggernaut exacts, and the penalties he imposes; but, in their submission to his decrees, his vassals are kept in countenance by their mutual emulation in shameless subserviency. So few, indeed, are the examples of refractoriness which occur, that these biped spaniels are seldom reminded that it is possible to rebel.

Nothing can be more indefinite than this imaginary good, yet nothing is more tyrannical than the laws it enacts, and the sacrifices it imposes. It prescribes certain quarters of the town for the residence of its votaries; certain persons, whose acquaintance, *coute qui coute*, must be cultivated; and certain others,

who are to be as scrupulously avoided; certain equipages in which *les élégants* are to appear, and certain places where those equipages are to be exhibited; certain tradespeople who are to be employed; a certain style of magnificence in dinners, which must be adopted; and certain guests, whose presence is considered to be indispensable.

Now, as a due attention to these laws entails expenses not unfrequently far exceeding the fortunes of the votaries of fashion, it is not to be wondered at that they are often involved in embarrassments, terminating in ruin, and not unfrequently in crime, and its worst consequences. The moment they can no longer support the appearance they assumed, they are driven with ignominy from the circle, to gain an entrance into which, they sacrificed fortune and fame. Their pretension and folly are severely reprobated by those, to conciliate whom,

they incurred ruin ; and they have not even the *triste* consolation of being followed into the retreats their poverty imposes, by the pity of their partners in error.

To propitiate this more than Eastern tyrant, his subjects form new friendships with persons they cannot esteem ; and break through old ones with persons they loved. Even the ties of blood are violated at his mandate ; for what daughter or son could exhibit affection towards the authors of their being, if they happened to be voted without the pale of fashion ? The most reprehensible and undisguised bad conduct is tolerated, if the practiser is *à la mode* ; the most disagreeable persons, *fêtés*, and the most stupid, *recherchés*, if once the seal of fashion be placed on their passports.

Fashion reigns omnipotent in London. Its stamp can give currency to the basest metal, and buoyancy to the heaviest dulness. Men

of bad reputation, and women without any, can, by the power of Fashion, be kept afloat in the society it patronises ; and persons of high birth and station, with unsullied names, may be rejected, if this chameleon deity looks coldly on them.

The favourites of Fashion are, indeed, a motley crew. Beauty, virtue, wit, or goodness, are rarely numbered among them ; but, *en revanche*, the vicious, the dull, the frivolous, and the impudent, abound. Lady So-and-so is cited, in the clubs and coteries, as furnishing as much cause of complaint to her admirers, individually, as to her husband. Her acquaintances in general, and her friends in particular, do not attempt to deny the justice of the accusation ; but Lady So-and-so is a fashionable woman, and, consequently, is received *partout*. Lord So-and-so, or Mr. So-

and-so, is said to have ruined many men, and more women ; he is suspected of a dexterity at play, and skill in calculation, that would not disgrace the most adroit professors of slight-of-hand ; but Lord So-and-so, or Mr. So-and-so, is a man of fashion, and, as such, has the *entrée* wherever Fashion is worshipped.

Even to inanimate objects extends the insidious and omnipotent influence of this moral upas-tree. Time and space are alike controlled by it ; and the very drives and walks have not only their local and actual, but their intermittent and recurrent fashion. *Sunday* after *Sunday* (but only on this magical day) crowds of our sex may be seen toiling to the Zoological Gardens, to exhibit at once their gay clothes, flirtations, and the proofs of their addiction to the study of natural history, in their accompanying and extensive train of biped animals ;

who, though far more ridiculous, are infinitely less amusing than those in the surrounding cages.

Ask them why they frequent this place, Sabbath after Sabbath, having long since exhausted their *naïve* observations on the monkeys, and they will tell you that “every one comes — there is such a crowd;” and that on this day alone the mob — their synonyme for people — cannot get in; and, therefore, they select it. In my simplicity, I ventured to comment on the absurdity of excluding the reputable and intelligent mechanics, and their wives and daughters, from the garden, the only day their avocations allowed them a few hours for recreation.

I was answered by, “Fancy how dreadful it would be for us to have such people *nez-à-nez avec nous* at every turn! Oh, it would be insupportable!”

“ I cannot fancy,” resumed I, “ that there could be any thing at all insupportable in it ; *au contraire*, the seeing new and agreeable faces, and witnessing the enjoyment of those who have fewer sources of pleasure than we possess, would be more animating than encountering the vapid countenances that people have been yawning at every night during the season ; and who look as weary at beholding us, as we are at looking at them. It has been said by one of their most remarkable poets — one, too, of their own rank — that the English fashionables are as tired as they are tiresome : but this fact, like the secrets of free-masonry, is attempted to be concealed, lest new votaries should be deterred from entering the lethargic circle.

We live in a state of feverish excitement here, which, after having once submitted to for a while, becomes as necessary as opium to

its habitual consumers. *Fêtes*, balls, *soirées*, dinners, *déjeûners*, follow in quick succession, always attended by the same faces, and the individuals nearly always attired in the same dresses; for my countrywomen are not remarkable for the *fraicheur* of their toilettes. To be seen every where, or, at least, in those places where people of fashion congregate, seems to be an indispensable duty with the English, and to avow the *ennui* they experience is apparently equally essential.

“ What a crowd !”

“ How very oppressive the heat is !”

“ Are you going to Lady Leslie’s ?”

“ How dull this *soirée* is !”

These are the phrases one hears murmured around, night after night; yet the persons who utter them would be *au désespoir* were they not present in the very scenes they condemn.

Not that they do not experience the *ennui* of which they complain ; but that they fear their absence might be attributed to the want of an invitation, a calamity which would be considered tantamount to a loss of *caste*.

While, however, avowing that their amusements only excite *ennui*, they need not affect to be *ennuyant*, for that quality appears to be inherent in their natures. Yet they are vain of the supposed superiority which they imagine their assumption of fastidiousness of taste implies ; mistaking for refinement that morbid state of mental inanity which proceeds from excessive luxury and idleness. The English fashionables are the only people who unshrinkingly display their mental diseases, though they carefully conceal their physical ones. I refer again to that epidemic malady, *ennui*, under which all of a certain class ostentatiously suffer. They

seem not to be aware that it proceeds from weak intellects, incapable of rational occupation, or innocent amusement.

A fine lady or gentleman here acknowledges, without embarrassment, that she or he is “*ennuyé* to death,” or “bored to extinction;” two favourite phrases, which those who have the misfortune to listen to them might with truth repeat.

The exclusive circle is at war with genius and talent, though their vanity often induces them to draw to their dull routs and prosy dinners, those who are considered to possess either of these attributes in an eminent degree. They think “it looks well” (another favourite phrase) to see among the aristocratic names that are every day announced in the newspapers, as having partaken of their ostentatious hospitalities, those that form the aristocracy of genius; for they imagine themselves modern

Mæcenases, who patronise poets and philosophers, from the association with whom they expect to derive distinction.

For gentle dulness they have a peculiar predilection — from sympathy, I suppose; a fellow-feeling being said to make men wondrous kind.

A few of the houses with the most pretensions to literary taste have their tame poets and *petits littérateurs*, who run about as docile, and more parasitical, than lap-dogs; and, like them, are equally well-fed, ay, and certainly equally spoiled. The dull *plaisanteries*, thrice-told anecdotes, and *résumés* of the scandal of each week, served up *réchauffés* by these pigmies of literature, are received most graciously by their patrons, who agree in opinion with the French writer,—

“ Nul n'aura de l'esprit
Hors nous et nos amis.”

You will think, *chère* Delphine, that my picture of fashionable life is too highly coloured, but, believe me, it is not so; and, to convince you of this, I send you an extract from a sensible article, in an influential publication that appears here once a quarter; by which you will perceive that this class of society is by no means composed of the *élite* of the aristocracy of the country.

“ We allude to the self-elected leaders of what is called the fashionable world and their followers,—a set of weak, trifling, and often profligate people, by no means eminent for birth, wealth, or personal accomplishment, who, by dint of mere assumption, and by persuading a few men and women of real influence and high station to co-operate with them, have contrived to acquire a formidable description of influence in society, which seldom offers an effective resistance to a well-

organised system of exclusiveness. A few pretty women, not in the highest rank of the nobility, met at Devonshire House, to practise quadrilles, then recently imported from the Continent. The establishment of a subscription-ball was suggested, to which none but the very *élite* were to be admissible; the subscription to be low, with the view of checking the obtrusive vulgarity of wealth. The fancy took; and when it transpired that the patronesses had actually refused a most estimable English duchess, all London became mad to be admitted; exclusion was universally regarded as a positive loss of *caste*; and no arts of solicitation were left untried to avert so terrible a catastrophe. The wives and daughters of the oldest provincial gentry, with pedigrees traced up to the Heptarchy, have been seen humbling themselves, by the lowest arts of degradation, to soften the obdurate autocrat-

esses; and we fear it is no exaggeration to say, that more than one *parvenu* has been known to barter his vote in parliament, and more than one *parvenue* her honour, for a ball-ticket. The prestige has greatly abated, and the institution is now tottering to its fall; but its origin is worth recording, as a ludicrous phenomenon in the progress of society." — *Quarterly Review*, for September 1836.

We have, in England, however, innumerable members of the aristocracy as exempt from the follies that stain the votaries of fashion, as they are unambitious of mingling with them. For the knowledge of their existence, I have to thank a discussion into which, a few days ago, I inadvertently fell, with Lord Nottingham; and which has enlightened me on some subjects on which I had formed erroneous conclusions. I observed, *à-propos* to some tale of

scandal repeated by Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, that for one example of bad conduct in France, I heard, at least, ten cited here.

“Yes, *cited*,” replied Lord Nottingham ; “but what does this prove, Miss Montessor ? Why, not that there is more impropriety here than in France, but that we attach more importance to its existence, and more censure to those who practise it. If vice were as frequent in England as you imagine, it might be practised with greater impunity. The examples of it are not, as you observe, cited in France ; but this fact, far from proving their non-existence, only implies that their frequency has habituated people to them ; and that, therefore, they have ceased to excite the indignation, or to be visited by the obloquy, which attends similar offences in England. That country is the most demoralised where vice meets the fewest censurers. You must not

judge Englishwomen by the specimens Lord Charles Fitzhardinge has named ; or by some of those you meet in the *coterie* of the Comtesse of Hohenlinden. These form the exceptions to the female propriety which, be assured, exists to a greater extent among the women of this country than in any other—a fact, of which the reprobation with which the conduct of the erring few is visited, furnishes the most undeniable proof.”

“ But I do not admit that impropriety of conduct meets with this reprobation,” answered I ; “ *au contraire*, I assert, that nowhere is it practised with such impunity as here.”

“ Why will you judge England so superficially, Miss Montessor ? and Englishwomen, by the *clique* (for it is nothing more), termed exclusives ? which, like an unhealthy excrescence, has grown out of the repletion produced by

excess of luxury. The individuals composing the circle by which you judge, form, I repeat, the exception to the general rule. They act as if they considered themselves not amenable to the laws of society; and have established a little republic of their own, to oppose the government they could not subvert. This *clique* stands apart, and long may it continue so, from the general mass of the higher class; and is at once our shame, and our reproach, in the estimation of those who, like you, consider its members, in consequence of their meretricious glare of fashion, as specimens of the morals and conduct of the great body of our aristocracy and gentry. As well might you suppose that, because our papers teem with reports of theft, all the English are addicted to that crime, as imagine that, because some individuals in a large community are guilty of

errors, all the rest are also culpable ; whereas, in no country is theft viewed with more abhorrence, or punished with greater severity."

You see, *chère* Delphine, that I give you *le pour et le contre* in this description, in which I had not the superiority ; unlike *notre bonne* Duchesse de Mirrecourt, who repeats only the strong part of her own conversations, and the weak ones of her adversaries. Is not this being frank ?

Hitherto I have imagined, that goodness and dulness were synonymous terms ; a mistake but too often made by those who, like me, look more to the pleasures of society than the happiness of a home. But the truth is, *chère* Delphine, that I have lived too much in the world, and examined too little my own heart, to have become acquainted with the quality of the soil ; which, though perhaps naturally, not altogether evil, is covered by an artificial and

rocky stratum, that requires a careful and laborious cultivation to render it capable of producing aught but tares.

In *la belle France* one sees little of home; there is even in your language no epithet to express it: for the *chez moi* is associated in my mind with certain evening receptions to some fifty of one's acquaintances, rather than with the domestic circle; and reminds me of your answer to *madame votre mère*, when she accused you of never being *chez vous*:— "*Mais, ma chère mère, je suis, au contraire, très casanière cette année, car je reste chez moi deux fois dans la semaine; au lieu que, l'année passée, je ne restai qu'une.*" Well do I remember those two weekly *soirées*, when your *salon* was filled with the *élite* of all the *spirituel* in Paris; and this we considered being *très casanier*, *n'est-ce pas?* Yet those were pleasant times, for, unlike the plan adopted here,

amusement was not made the business of life, and we paused not to consider, as the English do, whether we were fashionable or unfashionable; or how many persons' vanities we had wounded by excluding them from our *réunions* — a reflection indispensable, as it appears to me, to the perfect enjoyment of my inanimate and *blasés* compatriots.

You ask me, *chère amie*, for a description or definition of a woman of fashion, according to the common acceptation of the term here. They are actresses, who play difficult parts on the stage of life, to audiences who are ever more prone to hiss than to applaud their performances. They lose their individuality as wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers, the sole parts women ought to enact, being recognised only in those fictitious *rôles* in which they have chosen to exhibit before the public, and for which frivolous mummery, they are paid

by slander, mockery, and contempt. They, as you may well believe, are little aware of the sentiments they excite; *au contraire*, they imagine themselves to be admired and envied; and even should some demonstration of the reverse meet their observation, they would, in all probability, attribute it to jealousy and envy.

There are few *métiers* more fatiguing than that of a woman of fashion. She is condemned to a perpetual activity to maintain her position, as Napoleon was, to make war abroad to preserve his power at home. Indolence on her part would quickly lead to her deposition, for there are as many competitors for the *rôle* as for that of *premier*; and, like their political parallels, the most incapable are those who are the most indefatigable in seeking the distinction.

A woman of fashion must be callous to the domestic affections. How could she fulfil the

arduous duties of her post, were she watching by the sick-bed of some dear relative, or consoling some bereaved one? How could she devote that attention to the regulations which, as a patroness of Almack's, she must see enforced, were her mornings devoted to superintending the studies of her children, or overlooking the details of her *ménage*? Luckily for women of fashion, excellent nurses can now be hired, who perform for gold the duties to the sick which were wont to be fulfilled at the instigation of affection. Humble companions, known here under the appellation of toadies, speak, look, or read, according to order, by the easy-chair or sofa of the mourner; governesses, with "all manner of accomplishments," and no manner of knowledge, instruct the young ladies how to — catch rich husbands; and *maîtres d'hôtel* regulate the establishment, and also the *per centage* they

are to receive for encouraging waste and extortion in it.

The woman of fashion, having emancipated herself from the drudgery of household cares, and domestic duties, and, having substituted the services of hirelings, has ample time to perform the self-imposed functions of her office. She can devote a considerable portion of her mornings to looking over and answering the various applications for admission to Almack's. She can reject or accede to the humble petitions, for the success of which young hearts throb, and old ones deign to sue. She can receive the *élite* of her coterie, sit in conclave on the admissibility of those who aspire to enter it, take a *femininely* warm part in the politics of whichever faction she has adopted ; and pronounce on the ineligibility of those of the opposite one, without ever having given a serious thought (for ladies of fashion

are not addicted to serious thoughts) to the merits or qualifications of either party. Thus, half the life of the being I have attempted to describe is passed ; not so much in seeking her own gratification as in endeavouring to impede that of others.

A wish of displaying the power she has usurped, induces her, not unfrequently, to an arbitrary and ill-natured abuse of it, exhibited in preventing the access of others to scenes where they, in their ignorance, imagine enjoyment is to be found ; but where she, in her knowledge, has only too often proved the fallacy of their supposition.

How different is the life of a *grande dame chez vous!* for, luckily, you have no women of fashion. In Paris, each lady is satisfied with the distinction to which her birth, station, and talents, entitle her. She is only one of a galaxy of stars that shine in the same sphere. She

desires to enjoy the pleasures thrown into her own path, but has no wish to exclude others from a participation in them; and is happy in the freedom from all that disagreeable responsibility which is the principal object of the ambition of a woman of fashion in London.

If I have *ennuyed* you by the *tableau* I have attempted to paint, pardon me; and be assured it is hardly more *ennuyeux* than the originals from which it was sketched.

In no country is selfishness so unblushingly practised, and openly avowed, as in England, by a certain set. "Be prosperous and happy, never require our services, and we will remain your friends," is the principle on which society acts here; and this is so well understood, that, for the most part, those who stand in need of aid, shrink from soliciting it from their closest and dearest nominal friends.

But this selfishness is apparent in the gene-

rality of the actions of my countrymen. If a person, with whom they have been in the habit of associating, leaves England for a year, and then returns, his former acquaintances seldom seek to renew the intimacy. They have, during his absence, filled up his place; they have become accustomed not to look for, or go to him; and it requires a year, at least, with a good house and a good cook, to re-establish the friendships his absence has interrupted.

A man repairs to India, condemned by sad necessity to recruit his shattered fortunes. He goes, casting many a longing, lingering look behind, at the haunts and companions of his youth, with whom he leaves a portion of his heart. He returns with his dearly bought gold, purchased with his best years, and no inconsiderable portion of his liver, impatient to mingle again with those from whom he sighed to part. He has forgotten the characteristic coldness of

manner of his countrymen, and approaches each remembered face, with gladness and warmth; when he is chilled by a careless "How are you?" accompanied by an extension of the fore-finger of the right hand, and followed by a *nonchalant* demand of, "How long have you been in town? I have not seen you for some time."

He encounters the same reception from all his old associates, who, reminded by the change in his face of the possibility of a nearly similar one in their own visages, conceive a dislike to him; and, unless he is supposed to possess countless lacs of rupees, and to be fond of play, he is voted a bore, and condemned to seek for society among the golden-visaged members of the Asiatic club, who can sympathise in his loss of liver, and expatiate on the comforts of curry and sangarree.

A good cook is the most infallible essential

towards the acquisition of popularity in London ; and he who allows a dozen guests to judge of the talents of his *chef de cuisine*, once a week, is certain of being considered a person of importance. The stomach is so near the heart, that he who gratifies the one, will be sure to make an agreeable impression on the other : hence, a giver of good dinners is always popular. He may be a man suspected of having perpetrated many evil deeds, and convicted of some ; but if he stops the mouths of a certain set of *gourmands* with *fillets de volaille aux truffes*, he may defy censure.

A modern Lucullus, whose fame was less approved than his dinners, was once nearly cut by his friends because he refused to submit to the extravagant demands of his cook, who asked for double the usual wages ; and it was not until he had satisfied them, by positive

proof, that the successor was quite as good an *artiste*, that they renewed the bond of union.

You, who have seen society in Italy, Germany, and France, can form no idea of its incongruities in England. Its laws — if laws they may be called — are at once the most absurd and partial; the most lax in the general principles, and unjust in their individual punishments.

Yet this country, which we on the Continent were led to believe was the land, *par excellence*, where female propriety was the most indispensable essential for ensuring a good reception; and the want of it a barrier which neither rank, wealth, nor genius, could enable their possessor to surmount,—every day's experience proves to be precisely that where its absence is the least severely punished.

Nothing is more usual than to hear, in a

morning visit, reports the most injurious to female honour, of divers ladies, and yet meet those very persons, in the most fashionable society at night, as well received as if no such rumours had ever existed. In candour, I ought to add, that such examples are, I believe, wholly confined to the exclusive, or ultra-fashionable circle; for it is generally admitted, that there is to be found among the English aristocracy some of the brightest models of female purity and decorum. But these mix rarely with the *clique* self-named exclusive, who are for the most part composed of the impoverished *noblesse*, coquettes of doubtful, or, rather, *not* doubtful, reputations, silly aspirants to notoriety, imagining that unflattering distinction to be a species of celebrity.

Such are the persons who assume to give the tone to society in London: judge, then,

what that tone must be! It has all the frivolity and *légèreté* of the Parisian circles; but not the *esprit*, vivacity, and ease, that characterise them: and, above all, not that attention to *les bienséances*, which, in France, precludes a woman from violating *les convenances de société*, however she may in private be deficient in morality.

I should like to have an opportunity of judging all the various classes of society here, being, as you are aware, *un peu philosophe*; and rather given to study the bipeds that compose the different grades.

Madame de Staël compared the English to the favourite beverage of the lower order — porter: the top all froth, the middle good, and the bottom dregs. This simile contains, I believe, more truth than is to be found in many of the paradoxical comparisons of that

highly gifted woman, who sometimes played with her genius, as our favourite Malibran does with her voice, more to surprise than please.

The middle class here possess, I am told, all the advantages of education and refinement, exempt from the demoralisation that, but too frequently, accompany and sully them : an exemption which even I, with all my philosophy, think is to be attributed to the influence of religious principles, and to the habits of discipline and decorum which they never fail to engender. Yes, *reflexion faite*, I am compelled to acknowledge, that all I have seen of other countries and this, has led to the conviction, that religion is the best guarantee for the prosperity and stability of a nation.

Literature and the fine arts are, I understand, generally and successfully cultivated by the class to which I refer ; and their humanising effect no one can doubt, who has

witnessed the charms they diffuse over the monotony of the domestic circle. Accomplishments are not sought by this section of society for the purpose of display ; they are acquired as furnishing sources of occupation and enjoyment, and yield both. There is one folly, however, which I hear ascribed as peculiarly appertaining to them ; and that is, an assumption of belonging to the upper class. Each grade cherishes a similar belief, which causes subdivisions of society more gratifying to the puerile vanity of the individuals who compose them, than conducive to general habits of agreeable intercourse.

Each hour that I spend in London presents to me some new feature in society, totally different from what I have witnessed in other countries. Among the most remarkable, is an inordinate love of scandal, that induces its votaries to give credence to any report,

however exaggerated or improbable. Scandal reigns here unbridled ; and unredeemed by the wit which renders it so *piquant* with you in France, that, in listening to some *on dit plein de malice*, one is self-excused for the smile it excites. Here there is no such varnish to the crude ebullitions of ill-nature and envy, that render fashionable society as disagreeable as it is dangerous. Every one seems disposed to put the very worst interpretation on the actions of his or her acquaintance ; and never to be more amused than when listening to, or detailing, the errors attributed to them.

This peculiar taste for scandal in my compatriots is so well known, that it has become a staple commodity of traffic : journals have been established to retail it ; and the more pungent the satire they contain, the more extensive is their sale. Who could resist

reading an attack on some dear friend, some "poor dear lady This, or Mrs. That, so horribly shewn up on Sundays!" The men gloat over the papers in their clubs, consoled for the censure on themselves by that on their associates; and the women peruse them in the privacy of their *boudoirs*, or dressing-rooms, disclaiming, among their acquaintances, "ever having seen the abominable paper."

In London, any woman in a brilliant position may lose her reputation in a week, without having even imagined a dereliction from honour. There is so much *médiance* continually going on; people are, at once, so idle and malicious, that they seize with avidity on every new subject of scandal; and repeat it so often, that they end by not only making others believe, but by believing it themselves.

A gentleman being seen thrice with a lady in public, and as many times with her husband,

is sufficient to lay the foundation of a superstructure of scandal that will defy the possibility of refutation.

Each individual of the idle and malicious persons who love to propagate such tales, will repeat, wherever they go, "Have you seen Lord D—— and Lady E——? How they are shewing themselves up! they are never asunder."

This slander circulated at three or four clubs, where female reputations are lost with as much facility as fortunes, and retailed at half-a-dozen fashionable parties, sets the whole town talking; and poor Lady E—— finds herself the general topic, because she was thrice attended by Lord D—— in public, though perhaps in private they had never met once.

Lord E—— is then held up either as a dupe or as an accomplice in his wife's guilt; for guilt is immediately presumed. He is

pitied by one, blamed by another, and laughed at by nearly all; for even the pitiers cannot resist a laugh at a dishonoured husband. Lady E—— is cried up, or rather cried down, as a most vile and vicious woman, though an idea of vice had probably never entered her head; or else she is compassionated as a victim to the carelessness of a husband, who was so wicked as to permit her to be thrice attended in public by Lord D——; and who had himself been seen twice arm-in-arm with that nobleman,—an occurrence which is received as a proof of his cognisance of the *liaison*.

The lady's reputation is gone, the husband's character suspected, the supposed lover is envied by his contemporary *beaux*; and the affair furnishes conversation until some other reputation is offered up as a sacrifice on the altar of scandal.

Lady E—— is not, however, expelled from

society by her supposed guilt. Oh, no! as long as her husband countenances her, she is received as before; her acquaintances, being content with proclaiming her fault, desire not its punishment. If she happens to have a good disposition, her consciousness of innocence disposes her to believe every accused woman equally free from guilt as herself. She, consequently, pities, and associates with some of the most unworthy of her sex; and so puts the seal on her own supposed culpability. If, on the contrary, hers is not an amiable nature, this undeserved bereavement of reputation will make her slight the substance of the virtue of which she has lost the shadow: and she ends by becoming what she was previously only suspected to be. This is the state of London fashionable society, where appearances alone are judged; where not cause, but effect, is

denounced ; and where not crime, but its exposure, is punished.

Instances not unfrequently occur of women, free from any more serious charges than levity and imprudence, being subjected to the penalty that ought to be awarded to guilt alone. I refer to cases where the reports circulated through coteries and clubs are afterwards inserted in newspapers ; one of which, containing the scandalous charges, is sent by some malicious person to the husband.

His *amour propre*, if not *amour* for her, is incurably wounded. If he is a weak man, and the majority of fashionable men are weak, he concludes that her conduct must have been indeed glaringly indecorous, or it never could have obtained such odious publicity ; not reflecting, that the statement he has perused is only an exaggerated version of the gossip of

society, founded on no more solid basis than the unmeaning attentions he has himself beheld without alarm or censure. He recalls to mind every incident, however trivial, connected with her general demeanour; and none of them are now viewed impartially.

Influenced by his irritated vanity, he has already prejudged and condemned her; without any proof, save the slander of a newspaper, confirmed, perhaps, by an indelicate and injudicious appeal to his domestics, who have drawn their conclusions from the same source.

These very domestics, who had never attached an idea of culpability to her conduct until they had read the flagrant statements of it, now become spies, curious to satisfy themselves of the existence of the guilt they imagine.

Her looks, words, and actions, are narrowly watched. Every note received, every male visitor admitted, becomes, to their jaundiced

optics, presumptive conviction; so that, when questioned on the subject, they report rather what they believe, than what they have seen. Thus, a chain of evidence, based on erroneous conclusions, establishes a legal case: and the victim is expelled from society, seared and branded with dishonour, though perhaps free from crime, who might, if countenanced by her husband, have continued in it, though universally believed to be culpable.

It is not thus in France or Italy, where women, in losing one virtue, are not necessarily exposed to the loss of all. There, our sex are saved from the necessity of hypocrisy; and are not compelled to pull down the reputations of their contemporaries, in order to erect on the ruins a pedestal for the elevation of their own.

So few women in fashionable society here can afford to be merciful to others, that they

are often led to a severity they are far from feeling, to avoid incurring the imputation of impropriety. It is never the guilt or innocence of the accused that is made the point of debate as to her reception ; it is, simply whether Lady So-and-so, and a certain *clique*, will countenance her. As it is only the perfectly virtuous and irreproachable that can risk being lenient, you may conclude that, in the exclusive circle, few are the examples of mercy : but, *en revanche*, innumerable are the instances of forbearance towards those whose amatory adventures furnish the daily topic, and who are blessed with husbands whose charity covereth a multitude of sins.

You ask me whether English husbands are, in general, *bons et aimables*? *Pas du tout, ma chère ; tout au contraire*. They are, as far as I can judge from the specimens I have seen, the most selfish beings imaginable.

Numerous are the examples pointed out to me here of men who, a year ago, were the most passionate lovers to their wives, yet who now scarcely conceal the symptoms of the satiety they feel, even from the lately cherished objects that excite it. Men of large fortunes rarely marry from pecuniary motives in England: not that they are exempt from cupidity; very much the contrary is the case; but because heiresses are scarce,—estates being generally entailed on heirs-male. It is only when some rich *parvenu* has a daughter whom he wishes to engraft on a noble stock, that great fortunes are to be obtained by marriage; when the gold acquired by trade returns to support the exhausted coffers of the aristocracy, whose prodigality assisted its accumulation.

The unmarried men in London are remarkable for a degree of selfishness, indulged even to an oblivion of all else, and for a prudent fore-

thought, even in their affections, not so much the result of wisdom, as the dictate of this all-engrossing egotism. Venus herself, *without* a fortune, could hardly tempt them to wear any other fetters than those of her cestus ; while a very Gorgon, *with* a large domain, would soon find them eager candidates for the hymeneal chains. They regard every young beauty with distrust and alarm, as having designs on their freedom ; or as being likely, by their fascinations, to tempt them into a rash marriage, which they consider as the premature grave of their selfish enjoyments. They look on dowerless wedlock as on death, a misfortune to be encountered perhaps at some remote period, when age and infirmity prevent the pursuit of pleasures, or satiety has palled them. With the distant prospect of settling down at last with some fair young being, who is to be the soother of his irritability, and the nurse of his

infirmities, the man of pleasure systematically and ruthlessly pursues a round of heartless dissipation; until his health broken, and his spirits jaded, he selects his victim, and, in the uncongenial union (which, like the atrocious cruelty of Mezentius, chains the living to the dead), seeks the reward of his selfishness.

The men forming the upper class generally marry for what they term love, which is nothing more than an evanescent caprice, an *envie* to possess some object not otherwise to be obtained. They are so little in the habit of denying themselves any thing they conceive necessary to their pleasure, that one of their race makes little more difficulty of marrying the girl that has struck his fancy, than he does of buying some celebrated horse, for which he has to pay an extravagant price, and probably gets tired of one as soon as the other. During the first brief months—say, three or four—of his

union, he considers and treats his young wife, *not* as the dear friend and companion of his life, the future mother of his children, but as an object of passion; to be idolised while the passion continues, and to be left in loveless solitude—cast, like a faded flower, away—the moment satiety is experienced. She has been indulged to folly, doted on to infatuation, for three months; and then, spoiled by flattery, and corrupted by unwise uxoriousness, she sees herself first neglected, and ultimately abandoned, to bear, as best she may, this humiliating, this torturing change. If she loves her husband, jealousy, with all its venomous pangs, assails her young breast. She knows how ardently, how madly, he can adore, compares his present undisguised coldness with the fervour of the happy past, and concludes (not in general without cause), that another object has usurped her place in his heart.

Love, pride, and jealous rage, are now in arms; and how strong must be the virtue, and how steadfast the principles, that enable her to resist the temptations offered by vanity and vengeance! Reproaches or tears await the inconstant at home: his selfishness makes him loathe both, and he seeks abroad a *dedommagement* for the *ennui* they produce. The result generally is, that his wife either breaks her heart or her marriage-vows, or sinks into that humiliating and humiliated being, an unloved and unpitied hypochondriac; who details her wrongs and maladies, in a whining tone, to the vegetating dowagers and spinsters who have no better occupation than to listen to the tedious catalogue.

How many such women may be seen in society, bearing the barbed arrow of disappointment in their hearts—or, worse, forgetting in flirtations, the neglect that at first wounded!

How many count the weary hours in a solitary home, till daylight sends back the careless husband, with temper irritated by unsuccessful play, or excited to uncongenial gaiety by having won—unthinking that the next night will, in all human probability, see dispersed the gains of this! Does a wife indulge in reproach, she becomes an object of dislike; and if she endures in silence, with a paler cheek or heavy eye, these physical symptoms of what is passing within are considered as so many tacit offences against her liege-lord, who thinks it hard that he cannot ruin his fortune and health, if it please him so to do, without his wife, forsooth, taking it to heart.

Better were it, in good truth, to be condemned to the fate said to be decreed to elderly spinsters—that of leading apes in a place not “to be named to ears polite”—than to be joined to brutes on earth. And yet, spite

of such examples as those to which I have referred, our English young ladies are not alarmed, nor deterred, from using every possible means of entering the pale of matrimony; each, probably, supposing that other women have failed through the want of those attractions which she believes herself to possess, and which *must* retain their empire over him who is to be her lord. A few months of marriage dissipates the flattering illusions she has indulged; and, in proportion to the sanguine hopes she nourished, will be the bitterness of her disappointment.

Those women only escape this fate who, marrying for wealth and station, regard the husband by whom these coveted *agrémens* are obtained, as an appendage inseparable from them to which they attach no other value than as the medium of their acquisition. Hence, no other country holds forth such inducements

to women forming mercenary marriages as does England, by displaying the brief duration of that affection which offers the strongest obstacle to them.

The same gross selfishness that led the fashionable man to marry, leads him, also, to fresh indulgences of his passions. He becomes a confirmed libertine and gambler (for the two vices generally meet in the same polluted heart), and, having wasted youth, health, fortune, and not unfrequently fame, he returns to his cheerless home to inflict his dulness and despondency on the woman he has demoralised, and whose peace he has destroyed.

Lycurgus shewed a profound knowledge of human nature, when he decreed a law, prohibiting husbands from seeing their wives in the day, during the first year of their marriage. He meant to guard against the danger of satiety, that perilous rock, on which so many gallant

vessels have foundered in the port of wedlock. Occasionally, however, modern English husbands are, perhaps, actuated by a similar knowledge of human nature, and a still more potent belief in the advantage to be derived from absence, when they remain away all night from their homes, as well as the greater part of the day. *This*, probably, is the sole cause why the fashionable clubs are filled with Benedicts every night—at least it is but charitable to suppose that such is their object.

These very clubs, too, furnish another and powerful antidote to matrimony. The luxurious sensualists who frequent them, being, for the most part, gastronomers, who prefer a well-dressed dinner to the best dressed woman in the world, are well aware that the *recherché* repasts, with “all appliances to boot,” to be obtained at clubs, at a price within their reach, would be totally unattainable in a *ménage* of

their own, except by the relinquishing some other extravagance. They think no woman worth the sacrifice of those delicious dinners, *en garçon*, the well-iced wines, gilded *salons* brilliantly illuminated; and, above all, that *facilité à vivre sans gêne*, which they imagine female society precludes. How resign those luxurious suppers, that render a man as unwilling as he is unfit for the privacy and quiet of home? How abandon the excitement of the hazard-table after, where thousands are risked?

They have calculated, for such men are prone to calculate, that the great business of existence, which, according to their views, consists in eating, gambling, and gossiping, can be more easily and cheaply indulged at Crockford's, than the common comforts of life can be enjoyed in an establishment of their own: *ergo*, they are *célibataires par calcul*; and powerful

indeed must be the charms of her who can win them from their preconcerted plan of selfish pleasures.

But if won, brief is the duration of their abstinence from the exciting pursuits of their bachelor days. A few short months passed, the Benedict returns to his former haunts, rendered now more attractive by the contrast they afford to what he considers the monotony of home ; where, as I have previously mentioned, the luckless wife is left to lament in solitude, or to forget in crowds, the brevity of her dream of conjugal felicity.

A young man of fashion, for to such only does my censure apply, thinks that certain expenses are indispensably necessary to his happiness. The cost of a wife, he calculates, must diminish the means of gratifying his personal luxuries ; therefore he will not marry until he shall have lost the taste and activity for shooting, hunting,

and yachting. Then, however, the funds appropriated to these expensive pursuits may, he thinks, be directed to the support of a matrimonial establishment.

How could a young man of fashion exist without a shooting-place in the country, with a train of keepers to preserve his game, and dogs to run it down, whatever may be the cost? A moor in the Highlands of Scotland, for grouse-shooting, it would be impossible to forego ; and a party to partake its amusements must be assembled. This gratification is obtained at the sacrifice of several hundreds ; but the payer has the pleasure of reading in the papers that he and his guests shot so many hundred brace of birds on certain days : and *he* is satisfied.

Many are they who frequent the Highlands with little or no desire for shooting, but who, having no rational pursuit, are at a loss to know how to employ the two months that in-

tervene between the close of the London season and the opening of the hunting one ; consequently, at the mandate of fashion, seek this mode of getting rid of time.

The young man of fashion *must*, therefore, hunt at Melton ; and, to do so with “ decent dignity,” requires an establishment of grooms and helpers that would astonish Nimrod himself, could he behold them ; and the bills for which seldom fail to astonish the purses of their owners.

But it is not the horses and grooms alone that consume thousands at Melton : the *chasseurs* find that French cooks alone can produce such banquets, as they require to recruit their exhausted frames, and collect at their tables the “ best society.”

During the interminable evenings, the chase of the day furnishes the inexhaustible topic of conversation, each biped arrogating to himself the merit that belongs solely to his more intelli-

gent quadrupeds. Prolix details of asserted equestrian prowess—each narrator the hero of his own tale—enlivened by episodic histories of their favourite hunters, past and present, fill up the hours that intervene between dinner and the period of retiring to bed; unless cards or dice are introduced, to diversify this rational mode of whiling away the drowsy hours.

Many of the *chasseurs* at Melton are as little partial to hunting as those who frequent the Highland moors are to grouse-shooting. The truth of this assertion is best proved by the joyous alacrity with which, the moment a frost sets in, they rush up to London, like boys released from school; and plunge into all the amusements and dissipation of the metropolis, until a thaw sends them down again, with lengthened faces and shortened purses, to renew their sport.

How often is the thermometer examined with

wistful eyes, and an approach to the freezing-point hailed with pleasure! You will naturally wonder why so heavy an expense as a hunting-establishment is incurred, if they who entail it on themselves like not the amusement. Fashion, ostentation, and the puerile desire of even that species of celebrity which this extravagance can acquire, furnish the inducements; added to the reflection of the utter impossibility of otherwise filling up the winter months.

You must not, however, conclude, that all who hunt at Melton pursue the amusement from the mere desire of being *à la mode*, or from idleness; for some men are to be found there who really enter into the sport with a true zest, without making it the subject of all their thoughts and conversation. These exceptions to my censure are admirable specimens of the true English character,—bold in the field, and

gentle and well-bred out of it. Dispensing a refined hospitality to their friends, and encouraging the race of those fine horses, which are a characteristic boast of my country, but not assimilating themselves to those animals, by utter uselessness, save in the field.

The many who do not really enjoy the hunting pursue it in emulation of the few who *do*,—nay, affect to like it so passionately, that it is only as I have before said, the gratification which the setting in of a hard frost excites in them, that betrays the real state of their feelings on this point. To such self-imposed sacrifices will men submit from vanity.

Five months at Melton, passed in the intellectual and edifying manner I have described, require an expenditure of some thousands; and the London season which follows it demands scarcely less.

A bachelor's house in some square or

street near the Park, tastefully decorated, and luxuriously furnished, receives the Meltonian *chasseur* in April. He subscribes to an omnibus box at the opera, and to one at most of the theatres *à la mode*; frequents all the places of fashionable resort; enters into a praiseworthy competition with his contemporaries, as to who shall give the most *recherché* dinners every day; and sports equipages that would drive to despair a Parisian *élégant*, so perfect are they in their details, and so faultless in the *ensemble*.

When the season draws near a close, the man of fashion departs for his yacht, which, in the luxuriousness of its accommodation, and splendour of its decoration, far surpasses the famed galley in which Cleopatra sailed down the Cydnus.

What time has such a man as the one whose avocations I have attempted to describe,

to bestow on a wife? or what funds, not appropriated to his own personal gratification, to meet the additional expense she would unavoidably create? No; the individuals who form the *genus* of which I have sketched a specimen, know that a wife, however amiable, or delightful, would only be an obstacle to the pursuit of their selfish pleasures; and, therefore, sedulously avoid matrimony.

The following lines were given to me, the other day, by Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, descriptive of the miseries entailed on a man by marriage; and they are so expressive of the feelings of all this sort of men here, that I send them to you:—

YOUR WIFE

“ Who meets you in your days of youth,
Dreaming of joy and hope, forsooth,
And makes you plight to her your truth?—

Your Wife.

“ Who greets you with the smiles most bland,
Until a flame of love is fanned ;
And you, poor fool ! demand her hand ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who, when the Gordian knot is tied,
Ere yet she ceases to be bride,
Casts all her winning ways aside ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who jealous is of each past flame,
She ever guessed, or heard you name ;
And counts them o'er with sneer and blame ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who says they all were perfect frights,
And in defaming them delights
To pass whole days — nay, often nights ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who, as you cool, grows still more fond,
And strains to bursting wedlock's bond,
Till you would joyfully abscond ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who forces you to dine at home,
When you to Crockford's fain would roam
To feast beneath his gilded dome ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who gives you soup — ye gods, what stuff!
And fish, of which the smell 's enough!
With mutton cutlets, cold and tough?—
Your Wife.

“ Who gives you wine, that ice ne'er knew,
To wash down each unsav'ry stew;
And talk — how little sav'ry too! —
Your Wife.

“ Who has the children — ‘pretty dears!’—
To come when the dessert appears;
And with their *bon mots* fills your ears?
Your Wife.

“ Who forces you, for quiet's sake,
Appointments with choice friends to break,
Hoping, at last, escape to make?—
Your Wife.

“ And, while, in pensive reverie,
You think of where you wish to be,
Who quarrels with your gravity?—
Your Wife.

“ Who, when at length you rise to go,
Reproaches loud and deep lets flow,
With tears that spring from rage, not wo?—
Your Wife.

222 A BACHELOR'S NOTION OF A WIFE.

“ Who lets you find 'twas all in vain
You starved, and gave up iced champagne,
For one determined to complain? —
Your Wife.

“ Who selfish is, and void of tact,
Refusing aye to let you act,
As though you *garçon* were, in fact? —
Your Wife.

“ Who thinks a husband — ‘ there's the rub !’ —
Should give up living at a club ;
And if he wont, will pout and snub ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who is it that detests your friends,
Accusing them of selfish ends ;
And censure on their faults expends ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who jealous ever is of you,
And yet will have a lover too,
In spite of what you say or do ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who gets shewn up each Sabbath morn,
With reputation sadly torn,
While you're pronounced a blockhead born ? —
Your Wife.

“ Who runs you into debt each day,
Although she knows you've lost at play,
Caring not whether you can pay? —

Your Wife.

“ Who every bright illusion rends,
Proving you never could have friends,
' You were a dupe?' -- at least, pretends

Your Wife.

“ Who tells your faults to every dame
She meets, exposing you to shame,
Till half the town rings with your name? —

Your Wife.

“ Ye Benedicts of Fashion, own
Here's no exaggeration shewn;
The miseries I relate you've known —

Through Wives.”

The love of money, and deference to those who are imagined to possess it, is another striking peculiarity of my compatriots. He, or she, who can boast of wealth, no matter how obtained, is sure of being well received in society; though such persons may be illiterate,

ill-mannered, and not immaculate in reputation. On observing certain individuals, in the circle styling itself exclusive, whose personal merits would never have gained them admission, my ignorant queries as to the why, and wherefore, have been replied to by the assertion, that " he or she was immensely rich ;" a reply considered amply explanatory.

" Then he, or she, is probably very generous ?" asked I, in my simplicity, supposing that a lavish expenditure on a *clique* proverbial for the derangement of the finances of its members, was the secret cause of the reception of the said rich individual.

" No, quite the contrary," has been the answer ; " he is *très avare*, I can assure you : " for no one better knows the value of money, or is less prone to make a generous use of it, than *he* who has no other recommendation.

But what is still stranger, this same reputa-

tion for wealth is considered an excuse for the economy which a deficiency of income alone ought to justify. A man known to be rich may give, not only few, but remarkably bad dinners, and wines whose execrable quality all condemn; yet, still, the very people who would unceremoniously decline a far less objectionable repast, if offered by one of limited means, will freely eat the one, and drink the other, because — the donor is affluent. The parsimony of the wealthy excites no murmurs: people like to dine with them, and to have them at their own boards; why, or wherefore, I cannot discover, unless the feeling may arise in a superstitious desire of consorting with those who are favoured by fortune.

So well understood is this inordinate respect for riches in this country, that not a few instances have been known of men who, with only a moderate income, have, by the stratagem

of pretending to possess a large one, gained a consideration and an ascendance in society, which they otherwise could never have acquired. "Mr. So-and-so is certainly a *millionaire*," was the excuse for a man of vulgar habits being seen every where, until his death revealed the fact of his supposed million being only a hundred thousand pounds; a fortune more than amply sufficient for all his desires, but the reputation of which would not have attained for him that preponderance in the world which he ambitioned.

Can it then be wondered at, that, seeing the influence wealth bestows, people are more anxious to possess, than fastidious in the mode of acquiring it? Hence, speculations the most unscrupulous, and actions the most reprehensible, are undertaken. If crowned with success, the *mean* is forgotten in the *end*; and if failure ensue, the action, and its consequences,

pass away from the memories of those who knew the guilt of the perpetrator; for, no one here troubles himself to remember a poor man, except to avoid him.

I have now concluded a sketch, which, though it has no recommendation except its truth, may, I trust, *ennuyer* less than the witnessing the scenes described did your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

YES, my dear Mordaunt, you are right; I love— passionately, madly, love — Lady Annandale; yet it is a love as devoid of guilt as it is destitute of hope. The slightest betrayal of it would, I am persuaded, exile me from her sight for

ever; and I value the friendship with which she honours me too dearly, to risk losing the least portion of it by any imprudence.

You ask me what I propose to myself, in thus abandoning my heart to so engrossing, so ungovernable a passion? This is a question I have never dared to answer to myself. To meet her every day, to think of her every minute, to dream of her when I close my eyes, and to awake with the blissful certainty of seeing her,—these are my sole objects and aims; and these I may surely indulge without crime.

Mordaunt, if you knew the rapture I experience, when I behold her angelic face assume a more cheerful expression when I approach her; when I observe the deference with which she refers to my opinions, and the sweet and modest confidence with which she utters her own; the innocent delight with which she displays Annandale's hitherto neglected child,

and the pride with which she listens to my remarks on its visible improvement and growing intelligence,—you would not ask what I propose to myself!

The happiness of the present seems all I dare look to ; and so dearly do I prize it, that I tremble to anticipate any change.

She admits me to her *boudoir* during the morning, when Miss Montessor and the child only are with her ; allows me to read Italian aloud to her while she draws : and there are moments, when seated in this retired and delicious sanctuary, the ladies pursuing their feminine occupations, and the child climbing my knees, that I indulge the illusion that she belongs to me by the most holy tie, and that the child is ours.

I am too soon awakened from this blissful dream, by Miss Montessor's remembering some engagement to be kept, or some letter to be

written, that obliges her to withdraw; and what looks strange, is, that these reminiscences of hers always arrive at a *mal-à-propos* moment, either in the most interesting part of the book we are reading, or in the subject on which we are conversing.

“ Pray, do not let me interrupt you, good folk,” she invariably says, — “ I shall be back in a few minutes ;” and off she hurries.

I resume the book, and, whenever a pause occurs, am charmed with the justice and tact of Lady Annandale’s reflections. So much feeling, united to such extreme delicacy of perception, I never before encountered.

Often do I continue to read, until her carriage, or saddle-horses are announced ; and we both find that it is five o’clock, when we had only imagined it three.

“ How time flies !” does she frequently say, on such occasions ; “ but where can Caroline

Montessor be? she said she would be back in a few minutes."

"Miss Montessor has been in the library, my lady, for the last half-hour, with his lordship," replies the servant.

Does not this look strange? yet it does not seem to inspire Lady Annandale with any suspicions. Is it possible that this artful girl can have any design in thus leaving her friend and me, two hours *tête-à-tête* in the *boudoir*, and being herself half-an-hour in the library with Annandale? But no; she can have no motive. And yet it *does* look strange: I must keep my eye on her; for the account Delaward gave me of her morals justifies suspicion.

Annandale seems totally unconscious of my admiration (adoration would better express the feeling) for his lovely wife. He is continually asking me to dine with them, *en famille*, and to make one of all their parties — invitations I

have not the courage to resist. Yet there are moments when I fancy I have detected significant glances, or malicious smiles on the countenances of some of the corrupt men, and as corrupt women, of our circle, when they see me by Lady Annandale's side ; and I almost determine to sacrifice the intoxicating pleasure of her society, rather than subject her purity, which I know to be as spotless as snow ere it lights on earth, to the risk of one unworthy suspicion. I am more jealous of her reputation than ever husband was of that of his wife ; and would die rather than expose it to censure.

She rarely speaks of Annandale ; and her manner towards him is cold and distant. Of the Delawards she loves to converse.

“ Lady Delaward is indeed a happy woman,” said she, a few days ago ; “ for, in her husband she has found the most delightful friend, the most instructive companion, and

the most wise monitor (should she ever need it) with whom woman was ever blessed."

She sighed deeply and involuntarily.

"How vain, then, Lord Nottingham ought to be!" said Miss Montessor; "for you compared him, the other day, to Lord Delaward; and, if my memory does not deceive me, gave the preference to *sa signeurie*," bowing to me.

The cheeks of Lady Annandale became suffused with a bright red; and so visible was her emotion, that, great as was the delight which the knowledge of her flattering opinion of me conferred—a delight that sent the blood circling more briskly through my veins—I was angry with Miss Montessor for having betrayed her confidence.

"I was speaking of Lord Delaward as a husband," said Lady Annandale, with some reserve, and still blushing; "and, consequently,

could not compare Lord Nottingham, who is yet untried in that character, with him."

"You may, however, accurately judge of Lord Nottingham's taste for domesticity," replied Miss Montessor, "from the daily specimens he gives us of it. Does he not read to us, chat with us, moralise with us, and play with the child all the morning?" Lady Annandale positively blushed to her very temples. "Does he not ride out, drive, or boat, with us every day? Does he not escort us to balls, routs, and operas; or spend the evening, *en famille*, with us? And yet, wicked, ungrateful Lady Annandale, after all these decided evidences of a conjugal taste, you can doubt his fitness for domestic life!"

Never was embarrassment more visible than on Lady Annandale's beautiful countenance. She attempted to utter something

about never having doubted that I should always fulfil every duty I had to perform ; and Miss Montessor resumed :—

“ Yes, I am sure Lord Nottingham, notwithstanding he looks so grave” (and here she gave me a most equivocal smile), “ would be a model for husbands, were he once entered into that happy state. See him with little St. Aubyn on his knee, reading to you while you draw, and then doubt, if you can, what a husband and father he will make. Why, I defy that *rara avis*, Lord Delaward himself, to surpass him !”

I looked gravely in her face while she uttered all this ill-timed flippancy, yet could not ascertain whether it originated in *naïveté* or malice ; but, whichever was the cause, the effect — and it was a painful one — was obvious in Lady Annandale’s varying colour and nervous agitation. Luckily, a servant

announced the carriage, and I withdrew; almost hating Miss Montessor for the annoyance she had caused her lovely and sensitive friend.

What if Lady Annandale should become alarmed, now that her attention has been so brusquely called to the subject, by the frequency and length of my visits, and curtail or prohibit them? But why should I anticipate an evil I never could find courage to support? No, she could not be so cruel.

Do I not already, Mordaunt, feel one of the many miseries to which an unlawful passion gives birth? Here am I, trembling at the bare anticipation of being deprived of her society, on the terms I have lately been accustomed to enjoy it; yet not daring to look forward to a continuation of happiness that always seems to me too great to endure.

This it is to love, when destiny has placed an indestructible barrier between us and the

object adored ; a barrier never surmounted, but by guilt and despair. I am a Christian, and must never forget that the faith I profess ought to preclude both.

Ever yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

La victoire est à moi, ma chère et belle amie !
Yes ; this cold, this prudish Lady Annandale loves Lord Nottingham ; and with a passion such as only tranquil, concentrated women feel.

I see it in a thousand instances : in the bright sparkle of her eyes when he is announced ; in the drooping lid that veils them when he approaches ; in her heightened colour and embarrassed manner ; and, above all, in

the increasing reserve and shrinking modesty of her demeanour towards him.

I catch her looking at the *pendule* when the time of his daily visit approaches: nay, I have positively marked the quickened pulsation of her heart, visible even through the folds of her robe, when his step has been heard; which she can distinguish from any other, as I lately had a proof—and this is one of the many certain symptoms in the malady ycleped love.

We were sitting in her *boudoir* at the time he generally comes, when I heard feet approaching, and said, “here comes *le marquis*.”

“No,” answered Lady Annandale, “the step is not his;” and her cheek became perfectly crimson when she found my eyes fixed with an expression of surprise on her face. She was right: the step was that of Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, who brought me a note from the *comtesse*.

Lord Nottingham is *un peu bête*, for he appears totally unconscious of the conquest he has achieved; or else he is determined not to avail himself of it. His manner grows every day more profoundly respectful towards her, though it always partook of the Sir Charles Grandison style; and he now approaches her as if she were a queen, and he, the humblest of her liege subjects.

This surely cannot be artifice to dupe me. Lord Annandale *et madame la comtesse* like each other less every day. Her indifference has wounded his vanity, the strongest and most vulnerable of all his feelings; and her reserve and austere coldness to the ladies of the *clique* he is most ambitious to propitiate, has irritated him into opposing her will, by inviting them, *bon gré, malgré*, to his house.

Notre frau gräfinn, who is *si aimable et bon enfant*, when she has every thing her

own way, can, as you know, be not *un peu méchante* when opposed. She has never forgiven Augusta for being so beautiful—a crime of deep die, and rarely pardoned by women—and, to avenge it, she has insisted on exhibiting Lord Annandale as *son amant en titre*, which she thinks an *éclatant* proof of her superiority of attraction over the young beauty, his wife, and an infallible mean of mortifying her.

Notre frau gräfinn is, however, mistaken in this last calculation; for Augusta is so perfectly indifferent towards her lord, that she has never, I do believe, remarked his attentions to her rival. The truth is, her own heart is too deeply occupied to permit her observing the movements of others; and she has too little vanity to be wounded by the proceedings which would be most influential with the majority of women.

Notre comtesse is evidently piqued at Au-

gusta's freedom from jealousy : she had expected to reap an *éclatant* triumph from the tears and anger of Lady Annandale ; but, these being wanting, she considers her victory incomplete.

She is everlastingly directing Lord Annandale's attention to what she calls *les gaucheries et sottises de son épouse*, which are her terms for designating the reserved demeanour and constrained politeness of Augusta ; whose avoidance of her, the *comtesse* resents as an unmerited injury, which she endeavours to excite him to punish.

With this charitable object, she is perpetually asserting *qu'il n'est pas maître chez lui* ; a charge so peculiarly offensive to a weak man, that, to refute it, there is no folly he is not ready to commit. The proof of the truth of her charge, she says, exists in the fact, that he no longer dare have his house open, as

formerly, for those delicious *petits soupers* that once rendered his home the envy of all the *élite* of fashion.

She wounds his *amour propre*, by continually pointing out the marked indifference of his wife for him; and then she endeavours to apply a salve to the wounds she inflicts, by artfully adding, —

“ *Imaginez vous, mon cher, une petite sottise comme elle, d’avoir l’air de ne se soucier pas d’un bel homme comme vous — bien élevé, distingué, et spirituel; vraiment, il y a de quoi faire perdre patience.*”

Still the wounds rankle, and he likes the *comtesse* less every day, for being the instrument to inflict them.

He turns to me for consolation; and I have so thoroughly penetrated into the very inmost folds of his character, that I know how to administer it more efficaciously than any other

woman could; who, not having the same motives and opportunities for discovering and analysing his weaknesses, could not mould them to her will as I do.

My flattery is administered in small, but judicious doses; much on the principle of the homœopathic system, which first irritates the symptoms of the malady, in order to enable the practitioner to ascertain its nature, and then soothes it. My doses are too small to give distaste; not that I ever found any patients complain of their excess, provided they are amply sugared; but their paucity renders them more valued, and the taker more anxious for a repetition of them.

I extol him more by innuendos than by fulsome, unequivocal admiration. I decry the look of all men whose style does not, in some degree, resemble his own; and those who most approach this, my implied standard

of perfection and manly beauty, I remark, would be indeed handsome, if they possessed such and such features, — hair, eyes, or teeth, — always particularising those peculiar to him.

A good opportunity was offered me a few days ago of administering to his inordinate vanity. The Comte Walkarinsky, brother to the Comtesse Hohenlinden, has arrived here; and is pronounced, by the ladies of our *clique*, to be the handsomest man ever seen. He certainly is extremely good-looking, and possesses *l'air noble et distingué*, so rare and attractive. When several of the women were commenting on him, I, while assenting to his claim to manly beauty, observed, that his, however, was not precisely the style that I preferred. Then I proceeded to give a minute description *en beau* of Lord Annandale — of course, without naming him — as my *idéal* of perfection, which I saw with a glance he immediately appro-

priated. You should have beheld him at that moment, to be aware of the extent of self-complacency to which the gratified vanity of a weak man may conduct him : and the overflowing gratitude to which a judicious flattery gives birth.

You know how remarkably handsome the Comte Hohenlinden is : well, *ma chère*, his brother-in-law is infinitely superior : judge, then, how delighted Lord Annandale must have been with my implied compliment. *Notre amie la comtesse*, with her flaxen locks and light-blue eyes, never could be taken for a Polonaise ; while *monsieur son frère*, with dark sparkling orbs and raven curls, could never be mistaken for any other than a Pole.

Last evening we were surprised by a note, announcing the arrival of Lord and Lady Vernon. Lady Annandale instantly commanded the carriage, in order that she might go and see them ;

but her lord *hoped*, in a tone that looked more like dictation than entreaty, that she would *not* leave home, for that he expected some people to look in.

“ I am sorry to be compelled to refuse your request,” replied Lady Annandale, coldly ; “ but I cannot permit my father and mother to pass their first evening in London, without seeing them.”

“ What possible difference can a few hours make ?” urged *le mari*, with a most marital air ; “ and will not an early visit to-morrow, answer every purpose ?”

“ It would neither satisfy my impatient affection, nor my sense of duty,” said *l'épouse*.

Milor bit his lip : and *miladi* rang for her shawl.

“ You would much oblige me by not going out this evening,” said Lord Annandale, pertinaciously returning to the subject ; “ for it

will look so strange to have you from home when ladies come here."

"I should certainly comply with your wishes," replied Augusta, "if my own feelings only were to be sacrificed; but, as my father and mother rely upon seeing me, I cannot disappoint them."

"Then I am to consider that *my* wishes are, in your estimation, utterly valueless?" rejoined *milor*, growing angry.

"I am sorry you should entertain this opinion," said Lady Annandale, as, rising from her chair, the carriage being at that moment announced, she left the room; deputing me *à faire les honneurs pour elle* to the expected visitors.

Her husband, for the first time, was guilty of the rudeness, *purement Anglais*, of not handing her to her carriage, and allowed her to depart without even a kind message to *le papa et*

la maman ; an omission that, I am sure, wounded her much more than the want of politeness to herself.

Before she had time to reach the hall, the carriage of *la comtesse* arrived : and when *sa seigneurie* entered the drawing-room, her countenance displayed evident symptoms of ill-humour.

“ *Eh bien, mon ami ! n'est-ce pas, je vous avais dit que votre femme est bien la maîtresse chez elle ?* ”

Annandale tried to explain the motive of her absence ; but the *comtesse*, with a smile of derision, said,—

“ *Bah ! bah ! tout cela est bel et bon ; mais je prévois, qu'en peu de temps votre maison sera la plus triste de tout Londres, et vous, mon cher, le mari le plus subjugué par votre pie grièche de femme. Elle n'a pas même pris la peine de me faire ses excuses quand je l'ai rencontrée dans*

le vestibule. Mais, au reste, les jeunes femmes Anglaises sont si mal élevées, que cela ne m'étonne pas beaucoup. Ma foi, Talleyrand avait bien raison de dire, que les dames en Angleterre sont si peu spirituelles, que la seule conversation dans laquelle elles excellent, est la conversation criminelle, dont les journaux fournissent trop de preuves."

The *grossièreté de notre amie* evidently disgusted Lord Annandale; but I could hardly retain a serious face to hear her reprehending, with such severity, the want of good breeding in others, while she herself was committing the most gross violation of all its laws.

Lord Nottingham came soon after; and, had you witnessed the change in his countenance on glancing round the room and discovering that Lady Annandale was not there, you would have been convinced, as I am, of the deep passion he feels for her.

find sustenance in every incident, however trivial.

Adieu, ma belle amie! aimez toujours votre

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

I WOULD have sooner replied to your letter, my dearest Mary, had I not lately been so depressed in spirits, that I had scarcely courage enough for the exertion.

My position becomes every day more painful and embarrassing. Lord Annandale is so wedded to society, and precisely to that portion of it which I can least approve or respect, that, finding me unwilling to sanction the presence

of its members beneath his roof, he invites them in defiance of my disapprobation. The Comtesse Hohenlinden is a daily guest; and my marked coldness produces no other effect on her, than the display of a species of rude negligence too pointed to remain unnoticed.

Some evenings ago, I was delighted to receive a few hurried lines, announcing the arrival of my dear father and mother. To order the carriage, and go to them, was the natural impulse; and indeed my impatience would hardly permit me even to wait for the carriage. Judge, then, of my annoyance, when Lord Annandale coldly proposed my postponing the visit until next day, saying, that "he expected some friends to drop in."

To disappoint those who were so anxiously longing to see me, I felt would be most unkind; though to have obliged him, I would have sacrificed my own impatience, excessive as it was.

Lord Annandale's manner of urging his wishes, however, betrayed so much coldness of heart, as not to dispose me to a compliance with them; so I persevered, and went. In the vestibule I encountered the Comtesse Hohenlinden, who uttered some bantering remark on my going out alone; and the reserve with which I received her observations seemed to offend more than correct her; for I understand she complained of my manner to Lord Annandale.

You may easily imagine the joy with which I found myself once more pressed to the hearts of my father and mother; and their gratification at seeing me. I felt, beneath their roof, as if I had found a haven, after having been long exposed to tempest and danger; and only wished I was never to leave them again.

I have grown old within the last few months; years,—long years, seem to have flown over my head in that brief period: and I

shrink from that world, misnamed the gay, into which I was so eager to enter, with fear and trembling; for in it I have found only disappointment and regret.

Before leaving my father and mother, I asked them to dine with me the next day, being the first invitation I have ever given since I entered Lord Annandale's house; and, I may add, the first dinner in it that I ever anticipated with pleasurable emotions.

What, then, were my surprise and indignation, when I informed him of it next morning, to be told, that it was impossible; for, that he had engaged a party of gay young people, who would by no means suit Lord and Lady Vernon, and who would be quite put out of their way by persons of that age.

I ventured a remonstrance, but was silenced by the avowal, that "the party coming to dinner would vote his house the greatest bore in

the world, and himself, the host on earth the most devoid of tact, if they encountered such a very patriarchal pair in it as my father and mother.”

Wounded and irritated, I told him that, as he declined receiving them, I should certainly go and dine with them.

“Then you will commit a very ill-bred action,” said he, angrily, “and expose yourself to very disagreeable remarks, if, after your conduct last night, you again absent yourself from the same guests.”

He quitted the room, evidently vexed; leaving me to weep over the consequence of my own folly, in having married a man of whose character, feelings, or pursuits, I knew nothing; and who every day proves to me, in a thousand ways, that he is the most of all unfitted to contribute to my happiness.

He has not yet seen, or sought to see, my

father and mother, who are evidently offended at this neglect. They have asked me a thousand questions about him, which I have replied to in a manner not to alarm them for my happiness ; though all hope of ever attaining that blessing with him has for some time left me.

It is wrong to pain you, dearest Mary, with regrets ; but you are the only person to whom I dare disclose them.

Ever yours,

AUGUSTA.

FROM THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

You were right, my dear Mordaunt ; I should have fled from the presence of this too lovely woman, when I first discovered the state of my heart.

That its tumultuous feelings are no secret to others, I have had more than one proof; and the persons who have given them are, perhaps, the two most dangerous in which such a secret could be vested, being no other than the Comtesse Hohenlinden and Miss Montessor — two women who are capable of using the discovery in any way suited to their views.

The *comtesse* is deficient in the tact and good-breeding which characterise Miss Montessor; for, in her desire to do a malicious action to any one whom she dislikes, she will not scruple to commit any rudeness.

She wounds with an axe; while Miss Montessor uses a Damascus blade, so finely tempered, that, though the incision is far more deep, the pain is much less felt.

On entering Lady Annandale's boudoir this morning, I found her pale, and her eyes still bore evident traces of tears. To my inquiries

about her health, and congratulations on the arrival of her father and mother, she answered briefly, but, as usual, kindly; yet I fancied I observed a constraint and coldness in her manner very different to its general tone of amity.

“Annandale asked me to dine with you to-day,” said I; “and I have just come from Lord and Lady Vernon, who told me they also are to dine here.”

The tears now positively stole down the cheeks of Lady Annandale; and Miss Montessor left the room. I tried to utter some vague words, I hardly knew what, of consolation; and she, wiping away the tears that continued, in spite of her efforts to stop them, still to spring in her beautiful eyes, explained her emotion, by saying, that her joy at seeing her father and mother had made her nervous.

There was a constraint and *gêne* between us, of which, though most sensible of the effect, I could not divine the cause; and she seemed to experience these feelings still more acutely than I did, as she asked me to ring the bell, that she might have little St. Aubyn brought down from the nursery, evidently with the intention of interrupting our *tête-à-tête*.

When the nurse came, Lady Annandale demanded why she had not, as usual, brought the child to her; and the nurse replied, that the footman told her it was her ladyship's orders that Lord St. Aubyn was not to be taken to the boudoir until sent for.

“And his little lordship has been so impatient to come, my lady,” added nurse, “that I could hardly keep him quiet.”

“You are always to bring him here every day,” said Lady Annandale: “but I shall inquire into this order, for there must be some

mistake," and again she desired me to ring the bell.

To her inquiries as to who had given this message, the servant stated, that Miss Montessor had told him to deliver it. At this moment, Annandale entered the room, looking extremely out of humour ; and, scarcely vouchsafing more than a nod to me, he angrily commented on " the noise that tiresome boy," as he designated his son, " had been making during the last two hours ;" the nursery being over his library.

" You spoil the brat," said he, " by accustoming him to come here, and then ordering him not to be brought."

So saying, he briskly left the room, before his wife could utter a word in explanation.

I knew not whether to remain or go away — a suspicion of some treachery on the part of Miss Montessor, in giving the order, having

taken possession of my mind, and I could not banish it.

Lady Annandale appeared shocked and wounded by the harshness of her husband, and was silent and abstracted.

Miss Montessor returned in an hour, and, when questioned by Lady Annandale, stated that, seeing how low and nervous her friend had been all the morning, she feared the child would too much fatigue her; and had, therefore, ordered that it should not be brought.

This explanation may be true, and she looked perfectly unembarrassed while making it: but how came Annandale to know that the order had been given, without knowing, also, from whom it had emanated?

These circumstances seem very suspicious, to use the least offensive term that can be applied to them: and more appears to be meant than meets the eye.

On leaving Annandale House, I encountered Lord Vernon, who said, " Well, as you are not to dine at my daughter's to day, perhaps you will dine with me ; for I have had a note from her to inform me, that she will dine with us, instead of our coming to her."

I assented to the proposition, though I thought it strange that neither Lord nor Lady Annandale had mentioned any thing on the subject to me ; yet such was my desire to meet her who occupies all my thoughts, that I readily availed myself of the invitation.

I presented myself at the usual hour at Lord Vernon's ; where, in a few minutes after, arrived Lady Annandale, apologising for her lord's absence by saying, that he had an engagement, and could not come.

I was in the embrasure of the window, looking at a print, while this was uttered, and consequently she did not see me ; but when she

did, she positively blushed crimson, and her confusion was so evident, that I feared her father and mother would observe it.

They did not, however ; and attributed her increased colour to any but the right cause. She appeared ill at ease, though evidently endeavouring to conceal her embarrassment ; and the excessive affection of Lord and Lady Vernon, displayed in a thousand ways, excited her nearly to tears.

This simple and excellent couple are almost patriarchal in their manners ; and, unaccustomed to disguise their feelings, cordially expressed all the delight they experienced at having their daughter again at their paternal board.

“ I could almost cheat myself into fancying that it was still my darling Gusty,” said Lord Vernon, patting her head.

“ And am I not so, father ?” asked Lady Annandale, faintly smiling.

“ Not quite, not quite, my child !” replied he, with a mournful shake of the head ; “ for you know that you *would*, whether I liked it or not, give yourself to another. Ah, Gusty ! you dont know how difficult we find it to live without you.”

It was not in Lady Annandale’s eyes alone that tears started at that moment ; for her father, mother, and myself, were all alike affected.

“ I look upon Lord Nottingham as one of my own family — indeed, as a son,” resumed the good old man ; “ for he tried to console me for your loss, my dear child, and succeeded best in the effort, by appearing to regret you nearly as much as we did.”

Had you but seen Lady Annandale’s face at that moment. In an instant, her eyes met mine, and their expression of sweetness I shall

never forget, nor the bright suffusion of her beautiful cheeks.

“ Was he not our kindest consoler, my love ? ” resumed Lord Vernon, appealing to his wife ; who, laying her hand affectionately on mine, said, “ she never could forget how patiently I had listened to all their regrets, and commendations of their child.”

“ Patiently, indeed,” pursued Lord Vernon ; “ why, he seemed just as fond of dwelling on the subject as we were ; and not like Miss Montessor, who always appeared to be thinking of something else when we spoke of our absent darling.”

How did I wish, during this *scène de famille*, that I stood in the same relation to all the parties present that Annandale does ! How happy, how transcendently happy I should be ! And may I not, without subject-

ing myself to the imputation of vanity, say, how much happier *they* would be? for I certainly am more formed for domestic life than is Annandale. But why dwell on such vain thoughts? Happiness like this was never meant for me.

“ Had I known in the morning that we were to be a *parti quarré*,” said Lord Vernon, “ I would have engaged a box at Drury Lane, and taken Gusty to see my favourite after-piece. It would be quite a treat to have her at the theatre under my chaperonage, as in former times, without any husband to remind me that she is no longer all my own.”

I immediately offered my box; and, the family-coach being ordered, to the great delight of Lord Vernon, we were driven to Drury Lane; where we arrived in time for the third act of *Othello*.

When Desdemona pleaded in vain to her father for forgiveness, Lord Vernon positively grew angry.

“ My favourite Shakespeare was wrong in this view of human nature,” said the good old man ; “ he did not understand the heart of a father : if he did, he would have known that a parent *could not* spurn his weeping child. No ; this is not natural. Don’t you agree with me, my love ?” turning to his wife.

“ Lord Vernon thinks the hearts of all fathers like his own,” said Lady Vernon to me, and looking at him with eyes beaming with affection, while Lady Annandale placed her hand in his.

A large private box, opposite to the one in which we were seated, was now thrown open ; and Lord Annandale entered it, leading in the Comtesse Hohenlinden, and followed by

Lady Mellicent and Miss Montessor, escorted by Lord Charles Fitzhardinge, and three or four other young men of their *clique*.

I felt annoyed at their presence; and observed that Lady Annandale appeared still more so, as she shrank back behind the curtain. The eagle eyes of the Comtesse Hohenlinden soon discovered us; and the glasses of all the party, save those of Lord Annandale and Miss Montessor, were levelled at us.

The *comtesse* attempted not to conceal the mingled mirth and surprise that our presence excited; and Annandale looked more discomposed than I ever saw him. It was plain that the apparition of her husband and his party had given pain to Lady Annandale. She directed to me an imploring look not to remark their vicinity to her father and mother, who had not noticed it, being wholly occupied with the performance, or commenting on it.

The Comtesse Hohenlinden seemed to be engaged in an earnest conversation with Lord Annandale, while, from time to time, they cast angry looks at our box. What can all this mean? Perhaps, after all, I was expected to dine at Annandale House, and my presence with its mistress occasioned the apparent surprise I witnessed. But why, then, if I was expected there, did she go out to dine? All this is a mystery, to the solution of which I have no clue. Perhaps, by calling at Annandale House to-morrow, I shall be furnished with one.

Lady Vernon, being fatigued, proposed our leaving the theatre before the afterpiece was concluded; and her daughter, who seemed relieved by our departure, requested that we would leave her at her own door.

As I handed her from the carriage to the hall, I observed her servants exchange looks of

suspicion; and then glance inquisitively at the coach, as if to ascertain whether it was occupied.

Such is the dignified reserve of Lady Annandale, that I dared not venture a question to her, though impatiently longing to know,—why, if I was not forbidden to dine at her house, she had gone to her father's.

I left off writing to you last night, my dear Mordaunt, that I might tell you the result of my visit to Annandale House. I am more mystified than ever, and know not what to imagine.

On calling at the usual hour to-day, I found Lady Annandale and Miss Montessor in the boudoir; the former pale and sad, and the latter walking up and down the room, with the air of one who had been giving advice.

“Why did you not dine here yesterday?” asked Miss Montessor, with an authoritative

tone; “ Lord Annandale expected you, and was offended at having a Banquo chair in our gay party. You were wrong, not in preferring the society of Lady Annandale,— *cela va sans dire*,— but in *affichant* that preference, by appearing at the theatre with her. Your presence together led to several ill-natured comments and malicious interpretations by the whole party, which not all my tact and zeal could avert; and I displayed no want of either, I assure you. Such imprudence is very injurious to Lady Annandale’s reputation; and, if you value it, you must be much more guarded.”

“ Good heavens, Caroline! what do you— what *can* you mean?” asked Lady Annandale, blushing to her very temples, and then becoming as pale as death.

“ I mean that you, my dear friend,” replied Miss Montessor, “ are young and inexperienced, and, consequently, unaware of the danger

to which your reputation is exposed by Lord Nottingham's imprudence."

"I am aware of no imprudence," rejoined Lady Annandale, proudly; "and my reputation depends on myself alone."

I now endeavoured to explain to Miss Montessor, how my dining at Lord Vernon's, when I expected to dine at Annandale House, occurred; but she provokingly answered, "that, altogether, it was a very unfortunate mistake, and had done much mischief."

"I will, however," she added, "go and write two lines to the Comtesse Hohenlinden, to explain the circumstance, and prevent her, if not yet too late, from retailing her version of the affair to all the town."

She then hurried from the apartment before I had time to say a word, retreating by a private door that leads to her room.

She had not been gone ten minutes, when

the other door of the room was attempted to be opened, but in vain. We, for a few moments, passively heard the efforts, concluding that each would succeed; till, finding that they did not, I went to ascertain the cause—when, to my perfect astonishment, I discovered that the door was fastened on the *inside*.

This atrocious act could only have been perpetrated intentionally, and by Miss Montessor; for no one except her had approached that door since I had entered it: and a conviction of the most execrable treachery instantly flashed across my mind.

When I opened the door, the groom of the chambers and one of the footmen were there; and the expression of their countenances fully explained the vile suspicions this insidious deed had induced them to entertain.

Lady Annandale's appearance, too, was, most unfortunately, more likely to confirm

than check their impressions; for she was greatly agitated, and in an almost fainting state.

The groom of the chambers presented her with a *billet*, and then withdrew, and she confirmed my worst suspicions of treachery, by stating that it was from Miss Montessor.

There is some dark plot hatching against the honour and peace of Lady Annandale, I am now convinced; and I am, probably, intended to be made the instrument of it. Why else was the door fastened inside ere Miss Montessor withdrew? and why write a note instead of coming back in person, if she had aught to say?

This manœuvre must have been practised to furnish the servants with an opportunity of discovering that the door *was* locked. Yes, there must be some vile scheme in contemplation; but what can be the motive? Bad as my opinion of Miss Montessor has ever been, and capable

as I think her of much vice, still I can see no adequate reason for her connivance in a conspiracy, the sole object of which must be the ruin of a person I believe her really to like.

“ Leave me, Lord Nottingham,” said Lady Annandale, pale as death ; “ I am not well, and wish to retire to my chamber.”

I obeyed her commands ; and, as I passed through the hall, observed the servants all whispering and eyeing me, in a manner that convinced me they had formed the most injurious suspicions. Never shall I forgive myself, if, through the frequency of my visits, I have exposed the fair fame of the most innocent, as well as the most lovely, woman in the world to animadversion.

Yes, you were right ; I ought to have fled from her too dangerous presence when I first discovered that I loved her : but that love was and is so pure, and so wholly devoid of

hope, that I madly fancied its indulgence could not profane its idol.

I hate myself when I think, that to me this angelic creature owes the humiliation of hearing a lecture on prudence from the lips of such a woman as Miss Montessor — a woman as unworthy to approach, as she is incapable of appreciating, her.

On leaving Annandale House, I proceeded to Lord Vernon's, where I found the good old couple gravely talking together.

“Do you know, my dear lord, we are not quite satisfied with the conduct of your friend, and our son-in-law,” said Lord Vernon to me.

“Why, would you believe it,” added Lady Vernon, “he has not once seen us since we came to town; for, though he called yesterday and was informed we were at home, he never offered to come in, but merely left his card and drove off.” “Sir William Vernon,

our neighbour in the country, has been here this morning," resumed Lord Vernon; "and he told us that he saw Lord Annandale, with Miss Montessor and a party of fashionables, at Drury Lane last night, opposite to us. Now, only fancy his not having even the politeness to come to our box, if only for half an hour!—I don't understand all this, Lord Nottingham," said Lord Vernon, after a pause; "but such conduct, on the part of your friend, argues but ill for the happiness of our darling child."

"I observed she was changed the moment I saw her," observed Lady Vernon; "she is thinner and paler, and her spirits are no longer the same — she, that used to be all gaiety and sunshine. Would to God she had never married Lord Annandale!"—A wish that my heart echoed.

"I must see into all this," said Lord Vernon; "my darling Gusty shall not be made unhappy if I have the power to prevent

it. Shall she, my dear?" resumed he, turning to his wife.

Lady Vernon shook her head, as she replied, "Alas, my dear friend! the happiness of children does not depend on their parents: if it did, our daughter would never have known a moment's pain."

I left them expecting a visit from Lady Annandale, which, from the state of evident agitation in which I saw her, I fear she will not be able to make. You will hear soon again from

Your sincere friend,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

AFFAIRS advance here, *ma chère amie*, even more rapidly than I had contemplated. *La*

belle Auguste est tellement entêtée, that she compromises herself more than my most sanguine expectations ever led me to anticipate. I should be more disposed to regret her folly if I possessed her confidence; but I am hurt at finding her growing every day more reserved to me: nor will she, though I have frequently probed her heart, acknowledge the passion that, I am convinced, is consuming it, for her *preux chevalier*, Lord Nottingham.

So little disposed is she to repose this secret in my breast, that I can see she resents my leaving her alone with him. It was but a few days ago, that, more than suspecting she had had a conjugal *tête-à-tête* with her lord, which, judging from the redness of her eyes, could not have been agreeable, I thought that, with her softened feelings, a *tête-à-tête* with her lover might produce an *éclaircissement* between them. He, of course, as I concluded, would demand some question as to the source of her visible

depression, and an explanation of their mutual feelings would ensue. To secure them from interruption, on leaving the room, I charged the footman to tell the nurse that it was her lady's orders that the child should not be brought until she rang for him. I guessed this order would give rise to evil suspicions among the servants, as well as keep Augusta and her Adonis free from interruption until he had declared his passion. But, would you believe it, *ma chère*, I had not left her boudoir five minutes before she rang for the child; and, on asking the nurse why she had not brought him as hitherto, the whole story of my interference was discovered. She was more angry with me than I had ever seen her before; for she appeared to have a latent suspicion that I prohibited the boy's admission in order that she might be left alone with Lord Nottingham. I, however, extricated myself from this scrape, by saying, with a most innocent face, that I only

acted thus because I saw she was ill and depressed, and that I feared the noise of the child would increase her dejection.

The best of the affair was, that Lord Annandale heard the boy crying violently, and sent to learn the cause; when the officious servant informed him, that "his little lordship cried to go to her ladyship."

"Why the devil don't they take him, then?" asked the kind father.

"Her ladyship has given orders that he is not to be admitted until she rings for him to be brought, my lord," was the reply. This reply has ignited the first spark of a jealousy, not easily to be extinguished, in the breast of his lordship, who happened to know that his *cara sposa* was, at that moment, *tête-à-tête* with Lord Nottingham; as I had gone to the library to ask him for a frank, which *I did not want*, and casually observed, that I had been writing letters in my own apartment. Annandale has

lived so much among the most vicious of our ladies of fashion, that it would be difficult to make him believe that two young people of different sexes could meet frequently, and alone, without guilt; consequently, from the appearance, he jumps quickly to the conclusion, and has already, I am persuaded, condemned his wife.

The *comtesse* misses no opportunity of drawing his attention to the *petits soins* of *le beau marquis*; which, though of a most respectful character, are, nevertheless, too unremitting not to be remarked. The dignified reserve of Lady Annandale, so unusual in so very young a woman, *sa seigneurie* affects to attribute to hypocrisy; while, I am convinced, it proceeds from consciousness of a preference that alarms her virtue, and which she thus attempts to repress. *Pauvre petite!* she will, one day, have to thank me for breaking the chains I assisted her to forge; and for enabling her to

assume others, which will press less heavily. Yes, she will be a very happy woman as the wife of Lord Nottingham : for, independent of their attachment, which, I am sure, is, or will be, of the most fervent and romantic character, they are both more formed for domestic than fashionable life ; and will, therefore, retire to the seclusion of some one of his *châteaux*, without entertaining a single regret for the pleasures of London. The patriarchal papa and mamma of my lady, also, will gain by the exchange of sons-in-law ; for Nottingham acts towards them as if already he stood in that relation, while Annandale treats them with perfect *nonchalance*.

The individuals who compose our circle have already commenced commenting very freely on the attentions of Lord Nottingham to Lady Annandale. Their *liaison* is looked on as a thing no longer doubtful, and furnishes a topic of general conversation, and an object for the small facetiousness of the fashionable

pretenders to wit. Lord Annandale perceives this; and his vanity, the most sensitive of all his qualities, writhes under the infliction, which wounds not his heart—if hearts such men have.

Little does Augusta suspect that her conduct is the subject of remark, or that her virtue is questioned. How shocked she would be at the bare notion of it!

I told you of her going to welcome the arrival of her papa and mamma *en ville*, in defiance of the request of her husband to remain at home. This proceeding piqued him exceedingly; but not near so much so as her dining with them the next day, though he had a party, and ladies too, to dine with him. He apologised for her absence by saying that Lady Vernon was unwell, and that Lady Annandale had gone to nurse her,—an *historiette* at which the *comtesse* opened her eyes to their fullest extent, and, with that *air goguenard* for which, you may remember, she was so famous, burst into

a laugh rather louder than *les bienséances* permit in an English aristocratic circle. Seeing that Annandale looked vexed and embarrassed, I came to his aid, by adding, that Lady Annandale was the most affectionate daughter in the world, and never quitted her father and mother whenever they had the slightest indisposition. He looked his thanks; while the *comtesse* maliciously whispered in Annandale's ear, but loud enough for me to hear, that it was strange so loving a daughter appeared to be so *unloving* a wife.

When dinner was announced, it was discovered that Lord Nottingham, who was expected, was absent; and, as Annandale has a peculiar dislike to a vacant place at his table, he was not a little discomposed by the non-appearance of his friend.

“How very droll it is,” said *notre comtesse*, “that Lord Nottingham has not come; for I heard him last night promise you.”

Annandale bit his lip.

“ Perhaps, as *miladi* has gone to nurse her mamma, *milord* has gone to keep company with the papa,” continued the *comtesse*, with a laugh, which was echoed by the whole party around.

I saw that the host was deeply mortified at this open and indelicate insinuation, though most anxious to conceal his feelings; and, therefore, I changed the conversation, led it into lively subjects, gave utterance to some of my most brilliant *bon-mots*, and, in short, played the hostess *à ravir*. I had, at Annandale’s request, taken his wife’s place at table; and I resolved to make him sensible of the different manner in which it was filled, and how much the gaiety of a dinner depends on the mistress of the *fête*. Yet, while executing this determination, I took care not to throw *him* into the back-ground; but, *au contraire*, drew him out, applauded whatever he said that was

passable, and glossed over what was stupid. In short, I put all the party so much at their ease, and rendered them so satisfied with themselves, and, *par conséquence*, with me, that Lord Charles Fitzhardinge declared aloud, that I made the most delightful hostess he had ever seen, and was precisely calculated to be at the head of a table that was to give the ton to fashionable society. None of this success was lost on Lord Annandale, whom I detected looking at me more frequently than during all the time of our previous acquaintance, and evidently more admiringly too.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

VOL. III.

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THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY

BY
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

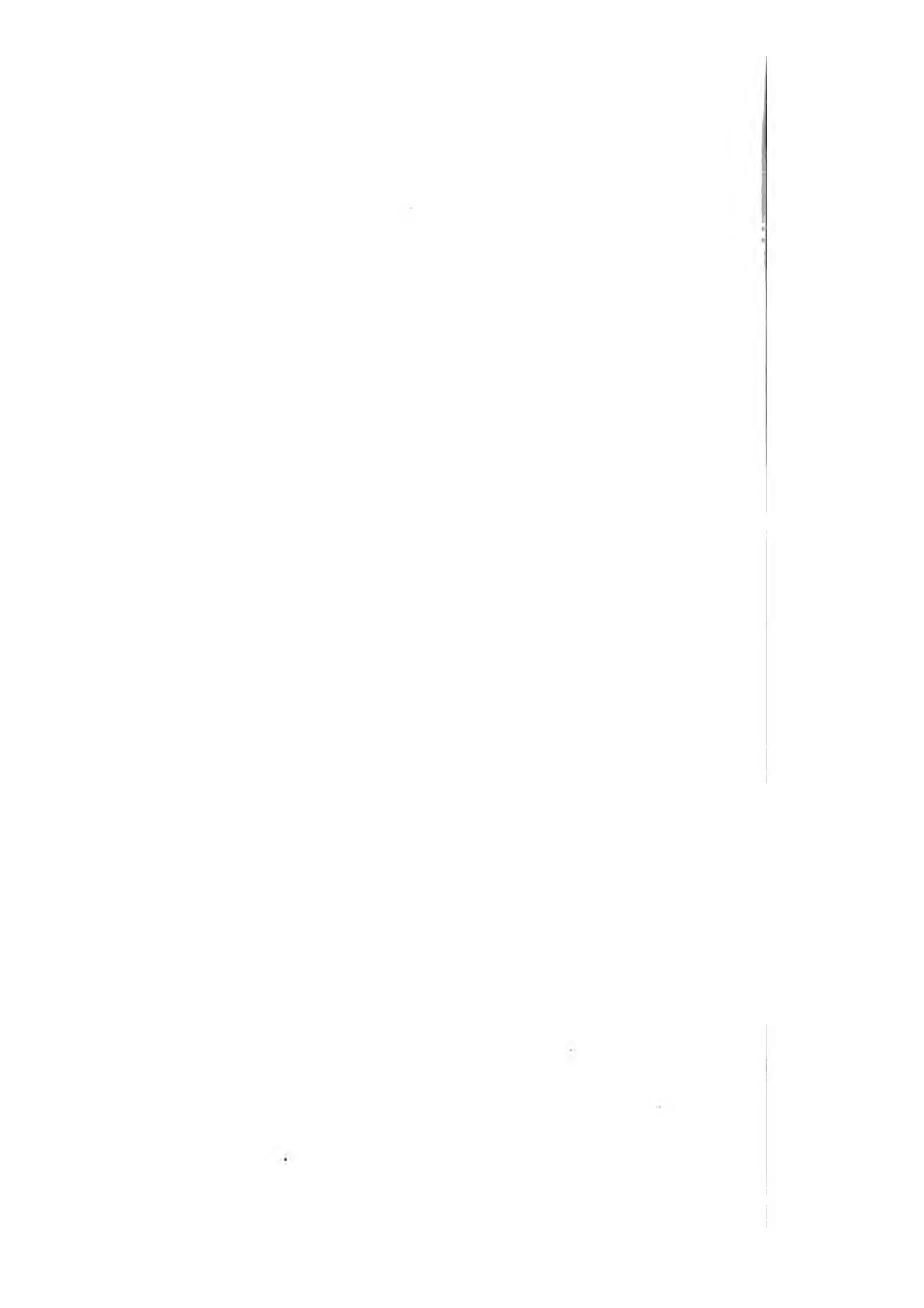
IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

“ 'Tis you that say it, not I; you do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words.”

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY CONDUIT STREET.

M.DCCC.XXXVII.



THE
VICTIMS OF SOCIETY.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

MA CHÈRE Delphine, I promised in my last to make you *au fait* of the scene at the theatre, and sit down to perform that promise. *Eh bien donc*, we went to Drury Lane in the evening; and you may judge my astonishment when, in the box *vis-à-vis* to us, we discovered Lord and Lady Vernon, Lady Annandale, and Lord Nottingham.

“*Ah, la voilà!*” said the *comtesse*; “*vous voyez que j’avais raison. Milord Nottingham est avec eux, pour tenir compagnie au papa, comme je l’avois prédit.*”

This remark produced a peal of laughter from all but Lord Annandale and myself: he looked furious, because he felt the ridicule of his position, and the *comtesse* had no mercy on him; while I used my utmost endeavours to put a good face on the business, by discoursing on the attachment of Lord Nottingham for Lord and Lady Vernon, with whom, I added, he had been staying in the country since Lady Annandale's marriage.

This statement, implying an ancient friendship, gave a better colour to the affair; and, though it by no means imposed on Lord Annandale, his looks thanked me for it. The *comtesse* pertinaciously observed Lord Nottingham's box all the evening, for it was in it they sat; and shewed as much ill breeding as any fine lady in London could display, though they all are, in general, remarkable for this quality—thinking themselves, I suppose

by virtue of their vocation, privileged to be disagreeable.

Our opposite neighbours left the theatre some time before we did; and, when we arrived at Annandale House, the *comtesse* was so indelicate as to ask the porter if *miladi* had returned, and with whom?

“With Lord Nottingham,” was the answer; which brought the blood to Lord Annandale’s face, and elicited a spiteful observation from the *comtesse*, as to the freedom from *gêne* of any kind with which *les dames Anglaises* managed their love affairs.

I can see that Lord Annandale begins to detest *sa seigneurie*, and no wonder; for she, to avenge her pique at his having married, hesitates not to say things that you or I, with all the malice possible, could not bring ourselves to utter. *Mais tant mieux*, for her *brusquerie* saves me the necessity of making disagreeable disclosures.

When the party separated, Lord Annandale begged me to indulge him with a few minutes' conversation. I displayed some hesitation and reluctance, which made him still more anxious to retain me.

“ I wish to speak to you on a very important subject, my dear Miss Montessor ; and, consequently, this is no time to stand on idle ceremony, so let me request you will be seated. You must have observed,” he added, “ the frequency of Lord Nottingham's visits here ; they are daily and long — too long not to give rise to idle and ill-natured comments. I have been too much, and lived too many years, in the world, to attach importance to trifles ; but when I see Lady Annandale commit her reputation and my honour, it is time I should look to her conduct.”

Here I attempted some futile excuses for her ; but he checked me, saying, “ I am aware that, from your friendship for her, and your

extreme good-nature" (the first time I ever was considered good-natured!), "you would wish to conceal or palliate her offences; but, I am sorry to say, they admit of neither excuse nor palliation."

"You surely cannot imagine, my lord," interrupted I, "that, blessed with a husband so every way superior to Lord Nottingham," (and here I affected to look confused at my own warmth), "Augusta could possibly bestow a thought on him."

"You are too good, too indulgent, my dear Miss Montessor, to think so favourably of me," and his eyes positively sparkled with pleasure. "It is a fact, of which you, perhaps, are not aware, but with which I have been some days acquainted, that Lady Annandale's position with Lord Nottingham has furnished a topic of scandal in the fashionable world; and we must admit that her conduct must

have been wholly wanting in decorum, or it never could have obtained this publicity in so short a time. What could be more glaring than her choosing to dine out to-day, when she knew I had company at home — Lord Nottingham absenting himself, too, without even an apology? And then, being seen with her at the theatre justifies the rumours in question; and I shall be rendered ridiculous in the eyes of all London, if I do not adopt measures to put a stop to her imprudence.”

“ Surely, my lord, you would not do any thing harsh, any thing likely to pain or humiliate Augusta. Consider how young, how inexperienced she is!”

“ You are an angel, lovely Caroline!” exclaimed he, seizing my hand and kissing it fervently; “ and I only wish that Lady Anandale had your tact and discretion, — but of that no woman that I know can boast.”

I looked down, tried to blush and appear embarrassed, which, of course, encouraged his boldness, until he unequivocally made me a declaration of love, at which I affected to be shocked; and he repeated his regret that I stood not in the relation towards him that Lady Annandale filled.

“When I saw you doing the honours of my table to-day, my charming friend,” continued he, “I could not help being struck with the different effect your influence spread around. Brilliant and witty yourself, you called forth all the agreeable qualities of others; instead of casting a *gêne*, if not a gloom, round the guests, as Lady Annandale’s reserved manners invariably do. I wish to fill a certain position in society, for which, I flatter myself, my station, fortune, and talents, qualify me; I mean the position of a leader of fashion, making my house the focus of the

élite of our society. I do not regard this important desideratum with the frivolous feeling of the generality of persons ; that is, as a mere object of amusement, or of acquiring fashionable celebrity. No ; I view it as a means of obtaining political influence, which our ministerial people have always too much neglected."

Here he looked as profoundly sagacious as if suggesting the mode of carrying the most important political measure ; and I affected to consider his puerile fancy, ineffably sapient and momentous.

" Our ministers," resumed he, " arrive at power at too advanced an age to become leaders of fashion. A veteran *élégant* is always ridiculous ; witness poor Ledersdale ; but, as I took office at a period of life when few are deemed capable of holding it," (you should have seen how self-important he looked !) " I may, without any risk of ridicule, unite the

rare position of a leader of fashion and a man of business. To effect this great object of my desires, Lady Annandale should be a totally different person. She has the *physique*, but not the *morale*, for a position such as *my* wife ought to hold. You, my charming friend, have both. Would that I could — but it is vain to think of what is impossible.”

He does think, and will think, nevertheless, of this seeming impossibility, until it ceases to be one : for his vanity will co-operate with my ambition in perpetually inviting him to the fulfilment of his wish ; and, rather than appear as a deserted husband, he will, I am sure, marry again the instant he shall be freed from his present chains, in order to convince the world that he cared *not* for his former wife, and *does* care for her successor. Every time I attempted to advocate Augusta’s cause, he silenced me by compliments on my good-nature.

The plea I most strongly urged, to prove the impossibility of her preference for another, was his own superiority. This fulsome flattery ineffably gratified his vanity ; for it is so inordinate and voracious that it would devour any thing. But it did not satisfy him that Augusta was willing to accord him this superiority, for her coldness too plainly implied the contrary : consequently, my seemingly most amiable intervention had not the effect of persuading him to forgive her, but only that of making him value me the more, for appearing to believe that she must entertain a favourable opinion of him. You see, *ma belle amie*, that the “ comedy of errors ” advances just as I foretold and wished ; but when a plot is founded on the vanity of man, it seldom fails of success.

Addio, carissima ! votre

CAROLINE.

A note from Lord Annandale, requiring a few minutes' audience, has just been placed in my hand. What can he have to communicate? I have not yet seen Lady Annandale, so I am all in the dark. I shall resume my letter after I have seen him.

This business advances more rapidly than I had anticipated, or even desired; and, what is very provoking, will sadly interfere with all the schemes of amusement laid down for the closing of the season. *Mais, c'est egal*; it is all in favour of other and more important schemes. Yet, now that the *dénoûment* of my comedy draws near, I begin to feel a little nervous.

I left off with telling you that Lord Annandale demanded an audience, which I granted. I found *sa seigneurie* in his library, in a state of great agitation. He had, it appears, on

leaving me last night, entered his wife's dressing-room, with, he says, the intention of seeking an explanation from her; but, I strongly suspect, he was very certain she had been some time in bed. He asserts, that a thought occurred to him (it is only husbands who ever have such thoughts), to examine her escritoire — the key lying temptingly on her toilet — expecting to find some tangible proofs of the guilt he imagines; when, lo and behold! instead of sundry amatory billets from *le beau marquis*, he finds naught but my lady's diary. This he considered *mieux que rien*; and so it has proved. Fair ladies, while you live, or, at least, while you love, beware of keeping diaries; or if you will do so, hint not at the feelings of your hearts!

Eh bien, ma chère, I judged rightly; Augusta loves Lord Nottingham with all the enthusiasm, all the romantic fervour, of which

only a young Englishwoman is capable. Yes, *ma belle*, you French ladies, with all your fascinations, and all your sentimentalities (and I give you full credit for possessing both in no ordinary degree), must yield to the untravelled *dames Anglaises* for that strong and enduring affection, which is much less a passion than a sentiment, nursed in secret, and matured in sorrow. The *naïve* expression of Augusta's love for *le marquis*, and the no less *naïve* disclosure of her more than indifference for her liege-lord, have enraged him beyond measure; and, to avenge his mortified vanity, he has determined on exposing her to all the consequences of an open *esclandre*.

Every expression in this unfortunate diary which admits of an equivocal meaning, he has tortured into a guilty one; but I doubt whether any other person could find more in it than

an artless outpouring of the secret feelings of a loving, yet pure heart.

This diary will serve to shew you more plainly than all my descriptions could, that *lusus naturæ*, the heart of a young English woman, which foreigners rarely have an opportunity of studying, and — may I, without offending, add? — more rarely have the power of comprehending. He has lent me this diary, so I shall copy it, and send you my transcript. I affected to plead for Lady Annandale, tried to extenuate some passages in this *naïf* record of her feelings, and to soften others: but what could extenuate, in her vain husband's eyes, that crime of deepest, darkest die, the depreciation of himself, so innocently expressed? Her love for another I do believe he could pardon; but her want of admiration for the person he most admires upon earth, self, he never can forgive.

DIARY OF LADY ANNANDALE.

YES! Mary Delaward is right. No woman ever should permit the daily visits of any man. O God! why was the bandage not sooner torn from my eyes? Now, alas! it is too late; the arrow has entered into my soul, never to leave it but with life. This deep consciousness of an unhallowed passion will destroy me; and I feel as if all who behold me could read it in characters of shame on my brow. How am I fallen! To whom can I pour out the miseries of my oppressed heart? * Not to Mary Delaward's chaste ear can the ravings of an illicit passion be disclosed: she would shrink from me in horror. To Caroline the confession of my error would only excite some heartless jest on the commonness of my misfortune. She would confound me with the crowd of

women whose guilt is not limited to the heart ; and I — I that was so proud and so pitiless for their crimes, have lived to experience the dreadful consciousness of a guilty passion,—that first step in the rapid descent to vice and ruin.

I knew not that I loved him until the sentiment became rooted in my soul, and identified with my life. While first listening to thoughts that seemed the voice of my own, I dreamt not that danger awaited me.

“ Each thought of mine an echo found in his ;
Our minds were like two mirrors, placed on walls,
Fronting each other, and reflecting back
The self-same objects — such is sympathy.”

I fancied, fool that I was, that I only felt for Lord Nottingham the same admiration and deference that I entertained for Lord Delaward. A growing distaste towards the weak man to whom I so madly gave myself, ought to have warned me of the state of my heart, by

shewing that it was the contrast presented to his mediocrity by the noble qualities of Nottingham which had increased my indifference towards him into positive dislike.

But no, I was infatuated — madly, blindly, infatuated, and shut my eyes to the precipice on the edge of which I stood. To count the hours of his absence, to listen for his step, to tremble at his approach, to forget all but him during his presence, and to dread the moment of his departure — this has been my life for months. Mary Delaward must have observed something in my letters, or heard some evil remark, to have induced her to dwell on the danger of male friendships.

That letter first opened my eyes to my danger; yet I had not courage to break off the daily habit of seeing him. Even now that Caroline has spoken more plainly, and I can no longer doubt the fatal truth that he is dear

—oh, how unutterably dear!—to me, yet can I not resolve to separate from him for ever; though that is the only conduct which prudence, duty, and virtue, dictate to me to pursue. How often does the thought intrude, that, when I first saw him on whom my soul dotes, I was still free! and I might have broken off the engagement my inexperience led me to form with a man whom, even then, I felt that I did not, could not love. Why did I not refuse to ratify that fatal compact? I might have been *his* in the sight of God and man; and blessed in, instead of murmuring at, my destiny. It was Caroline's counsel that lured me into this detested marriage — would that the grave had received me before I had formed it!

It is a relief to unburden my heart by committing its overflowings to paper, now that I dare no longer open its secret feelings to

Mary Delaward. Time was when I had no concealment from her; but to this state of mental solitude has my own wilful folly reduced me. With what bitter, what vain regret do I recur to the past; and with what dread, anticipate the future! So young as I am, too — how dreary, how cheerless, are my prospects! A few months ago, whose were more brilliant? — blessed with youth, health, fortune, station; and, above all, with parents so indulgent as to anticipate my every wish. Fatal, fatal indulgence! All this happiness I have perverted by my own folly. I forced these too indulgent parents to yield my hand to one I did not love: and that one step has plunged me irretrievably in ruin!

While we were in conversation on this momentous affair, a servant entered with let-

ters. One of them was an anonymous one, filled with charges against Lady Annandale; stating that her *liaison* with Lord Nottingham was no longer a secret to the public, and that it was even known that more than one of the servants had found the door of her ladyship's boudoir locked on the inside, when she was *tête-à-tête* with Lord Nottingham.

He read this epistle aloud to me, and was nearly maddened by its contents. I affected to doubt the truth of the statement, well knowing the fact; for I it was who sily turned the key of the door by which company enters the boudoir, before I retreated by the private door used only by Lady Annandale and myself. The letter I suspect to emanate from one of the servants; for the practice is not, I am told, an unusual one in London, on such occasions.

I left Annandale writing to his solicitor to come and examine the domestics; on the

subject of the locked door ; and, as I know the evidence of, at least, two of them will establish that fact, I have no doubt of the result. I must leave this house before the *esclandre* occurs ; for it might be injurious to my future position in society to be at all mixed up with it. To go to the Comtesse Hohenlinden would not be advisable, for she is in very *mauvais odeur* here. In addition to this objection, her lynx eyes would quickly discover the newly developed *tendresse* of Lord Annandale for me, and its probable result when he obtains his freedom — an anticipation which would rapidly convert her into an inveterate foe. I, therefore, see no course for me to adopt, but to return to *ma triste tante* in the country ; there to vegetate until a divorce enables Lord Annandale to demand my hand. I shall write, therefore, to my aunt by this post, saying that the air of London disagrees with me, and

asking her to send her carriage for me forthwith. This prudent measure will, I know, gratify Lord Annandale.

And now for the most disagreeable part of the affair—an interview with Augusta; *vis-à-vis* to whom I feel certain uneasy qualms of conscience, which nothing soothes but the conviction, that, after all the publicity of this business is over, she will become the wife of the man she loves, and have to thank me for being the cause of her felicity. I owe her a compensation for having urged her into a marriage which she does not like, and heartily hope she will enjoy all the happiness I wish her; for I cannot help entertaining for her a mingled sentiment of pity and affection, knowing, as I do, the goodness and innocence of *la pauvre petite*.

Again I resume my pen; but I make no

excuses for this interminably long letter, knowing that you will be all curiosity to learn how this complicated plot of mine works. I found Augusta reclined on the sofa in her dressing-room, pale as marble, and apparently agitated. After answering my inquiries respecting her health by a few brief words, stating the illness her looks but too plainly denoted, she told me that “ a most extraordinary occurrence had taken place; her escritoire had been opened, and a diary which she had lately kept (how the poor soul blushed when she named it!) had disappeared.”

I looked the very personification of surprise and innocence; could not possibly imagine how such a thing could have happened; asked whether she had searched every place for it; and hoped it contained nothing of any importance. I pitied her visible consternation, as she acknowledged that the diary *did* contain thoughts

which she wished no eye on earth to see, save her own. I expressed all the regret imaginable; trusted she would yet find it; and advised the necessity of more caution for the future.

“Do not mistake me, Caroline,” said she, gravely; “though I fear I must infer that you have lately done so, from the extraordinary observations you yesterday made to Lord Nottingham on his imprudence in exposing my reputation to suspicion. My honour, and its reputation, I trust, depend, not on Lord Nottingham, but on myself. I may not, when writing down my feelings in the sanctity of privacy, as if pouring them out to *that ear* to which alone erring mortals should have recourse, have concealed the weakness of my heart. But, if my feelings were culpable, my actions were irreproachable. One I could not always command; the other I could, and did.”

She looked so proud and calm as she uttered

this, that I stood abashed before her ; and endeavoured to excuse what I had said. How corrupt must that mind be, that could have seen Augusta at that moment, and doubted her purity ! Yes, my dear friend, there is something sacred, something almost divine, in a perfectly high-souled and virtuous woman. Heigh-ho ! would that all women were so !

I told Augusta that I had just heard from my aunt, who, feeling unwell, wished me to return to her.

“ I should more regret your departure,” said she, “ were it not that I think it fortunate for you to be removed from the too frequent intercourse you maintain with the Comtesse Hohenlinden ; an intercourse which I consider most disadvantageous to you, my dear Caroline, in every point of view.”

Perhaps she was right ; but, be that as it may,

I was so subdued by the recollection of the unvarying affection and gentleness of the creature before me, and the knowledge of the duplicity of my conduct towards her, that, as I remembered we must henceforth be strangers (for the *future* wife of Lord Annandale must not be the friend of the *past*), a pang of remorse and regret reminded me that I am not so philosophic as I had imagined myself to be; and I felt as if taking an eternal farewell of her whose destiny my influence had determined. Selfish and calculating as I have hitherto been—and I admit that I have been both in no common degree—yet I do believe, that, were I not convinced that with Lord Annandale, Augusta never can be happy, and with Lord Nottingham she will, I should even now retract, were it possible; for I could not bring myself to drive this innocent and confiding creature to shame

or sorrow. But she must, she will be happy with Nottingham—I will not allow myself to doubt it.

I shall write a few lines to Lord Nottingham without a signature, informing him of the attachment he has inspired in Augusta's heart. To how few men would such a piece of intelligence be necessary, for the vanity of almost all would have anticipated it; but he is too excellent to be vain. How superior is he to Annandale! How very ungentlemanly was it of the latter to open surreptitiously his wife's escritoire, and how indelicate to read and shew her diary! This is a proceeding which, even while it forwards my views, I must still contemn; and all right-minded Englishmen would, I think, agree with me in this sentiment. It displays so clearly a meanness, and want of high principle, that it leads me to determine on keeping *sa seigneurie* in good

order whenever he becomes my lawful property ; and I will have a lock to my escritoire that will puzzle him to open it, I promise him. *Addio, cara !* you shall yet see a coronet encircle my brow, and come to London to behold how well I shall enact the new rôle of a leader of fashion, though never forgetting that of

Votre amie dévouée,

CAROLINE.

FROM LORD NOTTINGHAM TO EDWARD
MORDAUNT, ESQ.

I DEBATED long with myself this morning, my dear Mordaunt, whether I ought to call at Annandale House, or not, to-day. It occurred to me that, if I did not call, the servants

might attribute my absence to some consciousness relative to the discovery of the locked door yesterday, and therefore I went; perhaps, too, the hope of seeing her on whom my soul dotes, also influenced my decision. The porter told me his lady was not at home, in a tone (but it might have been my imagination that so interpreted it) which seemed more than ordinarily *brusque*. I asked, whether Lord Annandale was at home? but he, also, was denied, though his cabriolet was at the door.

What can this conduct mean? Was the order given by her, or by him? I remember that there was a *fierté* in her countenance I never before saw it wear, when Miss Montessor commented on my compromising Lady Annandale's reputation; and the proud and indignant manner in which she repelled the insidious insinuation of that lady, still is pre-

sent to my memory. Probably that heartless woman's observations have induced Lady Anandale to close her doors against me ; and, if she have so acted, while lamenting this cruelty, I must admit its wisdom. I never should have had courage to tear myself from her sight ; for I am become weak and vacillating as a child. This engrossing passion has mastered all my energies, destroyed my best resolves, and left me naught of manhood but its wilfulness.

I have this moment received an anonymous letter, in a female's hand — its contents astonish me ! It states that I am beloved — yes, fondly beloved — by the woman, the writer is sure, I prefer above all others on earth ; that the natural reserve, prudery, or sense of duty, call it what I will, of the lady in question, may induce her to conceal her affection for me ; but that I may rest assured that affection

exists, and must not despair, though the person who entertains it should continue to repress all external symptoms of it.

This letter is signed, "A Friend," and must, I am sure, come from Miss Montessor. Who else knows or suspects my feelings? And yet what could be the motive of such a communication? I am all bewildered! I will call on Lord and Lady Vernon; perhaps they may be able to throw some light on the rejection of my visit at Annandale House.

I found Lord and Lady Vernon in their library, both greatly agitated, and the latter in tears.

"Look here," said Lord Vernon, handing me a letter; "this is the fac-simile of one addressed also to my wife. It is anonymous, and contains the most vile and infamous charges against the honour of our child. Yours, also, is assailed; but we know you

too well, my dear lord, brief as has been the term of our friendship, to doubt your honour, any more than we do that of our idolised Augusta, on the faith of whose virtue we would risk our lives. But to have that virtue questioned, and her name thus profaned, is indeed a severe blow."

So saying, he pointed to a pile of newspapers, in which, he said, the most indelicate references were openly made to a supposed attachment between Lady Annandale and myself. Now was it that all the guilty imprudence of my conduct, in so frequently attending Lady Annandale in public, and visiting her daily, appeared in its true light, while I perused the disgusting attacks to which my selfish folly had exposed her; and beheld the shame and sorrow it had inflicted on her excellent parents. I, who knew the world, ought to have foreseen that such must be the result;

but, criminal as I was, I closed my eyes on the danger to which my attentions subjected her ; and have, consequently, been the means of having that honour impugned which I would have risked my life a thousand times to defend.

I stood shocked and abashed before Lord and Lady Vernon ; for, though free from even a guilty thought with regard to their daughter, my conduct had all the semblance of guilt. The innumerable *liaisons* between parties of my acquaintance, of whose culpability no doubt exists, were all characterised by conduct similar to mine ; so that I had injured the reputation of this pure-minded and innocent woman to the utmost extent, by the selfish indulgence of seeking her society in a manner that must have impressed a belief of impropriety on the minds of all who had opportunities of observing it.

“ If Augusta should become aware of these

vile rumours," said Lady Vernon, "the consequences would be dreadful indeed; her pride and delicacy would be mortally wounded. Oh, my poor, dear, innocent child! in whose pure imagination, a belief, even of the guilt of which she is openly accused, never could find a place against one of her own sex, and to be thus profaned in the eyes of the public!"

Here a paroxysm of tears interrupted the mother; and, as I beheld them chase each other down that venerable, and hitherto calm countenance, where shame had never before brought a blush, I execrated myself.

A note was now delivered to Lady Vernon, and another to her husband. The father reddened to his very brow as he perused it, and anger flashed from his eyes.

"He shall answer for it!" said he, throwing the letter on the table; but at this moment Lady Vernon dropped, fainting, from her chair,

and we both ran to assist her. She soon revived ; and, pointing to the letter, begged that the carriage might be immediately ordered.

“ We must go for our poor child,” said she, turning to Lord Vernon with a look of unutterable anguish ; “ the house of Lord Anandale is no longer a befitting abode for her.”

“ Read these,” said Lord Vernon, laying down the note to his wife, and handing both to me. “ I will not, Lord Nottingham, so far insult the purity of my injured daughter as to imagine that blame can attach to her ; but, with her youth and inexperience, she may, through ignorance of that world into which she was too early thrown, have been neglectful of the appearances which, in the tainted atmosphere of London, are more studied than the reality of virtue. But you, my lord, who knew the danger, surely you have not been so culpable, so cruel towards my daugh-

ter and towards us, whom you professed to like, as to have exposed her, by your attentions, to the vile imputations now cast upon her honour? Her unworthy husband—for unworthy he must be, not to have better guarded the treasure we confided to his care, and for believing that guilt could attach to our child — writes to say that it is his intention to seek legal redress, and that he wishes Lady Annandale to leave his house.”

“ Let us go immediately for our daughter,” said Lady Vernon ; and she rang the bell impatiently, to order her carriage.

I glanced my eye over the letters, scarcely conscious that I had not even attempted an answer to Lord Vernon. What answer could I make, overpowered as I was with the oppressive weight of regret for the injury I had inflicted on their daughter, and on them? Annandale’s letter was cool and collected, con-

taining only a few lines, stating his intentions nearly in the words that Lord Vernon had repeated. Lady Annandale's note was nearly obliterated by tears, and ran nearly as follows—for every line of it is imprinted on my memory :—

“ Mother, dear mother! I am accused of a crime of deep die. Your child is disgraced and dishonoured ; but *you* will not believe her guilty, though all the world beside may condemn her. If I fancied you or my father could for a moment imagine me guilty, even in thought, of the crime with which I am charged, I could not live. Why, why did I ever abandon you? I am all bewildered, and have but one feeling, one wish left ; and that is, to quit this hateful roof, and (*die* had been written, and then half defaced) return with you to the home of my infancy—there to hide myself from the shame that has seared my

very soul, and destroyed for ever the peace of
your AUGUSTA."

And all this was my work! Oh, Mor-
daunt, to what fearful results does the in-
dulgence of selfishness lead!

"You will feel the propriety, my lord,"
said Lord Vernon, gravely, but more in sorrow
than in anger, "of our avoiding all intercourse
with you for the future."

I attempted to utter something, but he
stopped me; and, waving his hand, begged
me to remember, that to him no exculpation
of the honour of his child was necessary, be-
cause he never could doubt it. I felt that I
ought to withdraw, and left their presence,
writhing under the consciousness that I had
inflicted the deepest wound on their peace,
and destroyed the reputation and happiness
of her who is dearer to me, a thousand times,
than life itself. I am wretched, my dear Mor-

daunt, and feel that, could I but justify the purity of Lady Annandale, I would forego the hope of ever again beholding her; though that hope has sustained me ever since I have indulged the fatal passion that has wrought such misery to her.

Ever yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

I HAVE just witnessed, *ma chère amie*, the most painful scene; and my nerves are so dreadfully shaken by it, that I can scarcely hold my pen. I wish I had never embarked in the scheme that has produced all this *chagrin* to persons for whom I really felt no ill-will; for, now that the *dénoûment* of what I intended should be a comedy is at hand, it begins to

look more like a downright, earnest tragedy ; and I hate tragedies, off or on the stage. But, to resume. Lord Annandale's solicitor questioned the servants : the story of the nurse being forbid to bring the child to the boudoir, and the locked door, came out ; and these, coupled with Lord Nottingham's long and daily visits, were considered by the man of law as conclusive proofs, fit to satisfy a jury. Consequently an action for damages is to be forthwith commenced against Lord Nottingham, preparatory to an application for a divorce.

Lord Annandale communicated this intention to poor Augusta, in a laconic letter, containing some imperious lines ; and also wrote to her father, informing him of his desire that she should leave Annandale House. He begged of me not to see her, and proposed my going to the Comtesse Hohenlinden's until my aunt sent for me, as it was derogatory to my present and

future position, he said, to remain a single day beneath the roof of a woman who had so completely compromised her honour as Augusta had done. I could not resist asking him whether he was not aware that the *comtesse* had compromised hers a thousandfold more? He looked at me with surprise, and then answered,—

“ That the actual guilt of the parties was not the point to be considered ; but the circumstance, that, in the case of Lady Annandale, not only was the guilt presumed, but the husband had denounced her : whereas the husband of the *comtesse* still countenanced her ; and, consequently, her honour was in no degree compromised.”

And this, *chère amie*, is the moral of the fashionable world in London !

It appears that Annandale, with his usual *faiblesse*, has kept the *comtesse au courant* of all

that he has discovered. I strongly suspect, *entre nous*, that *sa seigneurie*, prompted by jealousy of the beauty, and anger at the reserve and coldness of Augusta's manner to her, has urged him to be still more severe towards his poor wife; though this instigation was unnecessary, for the wound offered to his vanity by the terms in which he is named in the diary, has rendered him implacable. I have ascertained from his own lips that it was my artful flattery which won his decided preference for me; consequently I have not the satisfaction of thinking, that otherwise he would ever have liked me. Vain, weak, and unfeeling man! if he knew that, even while profiting by his weakness, I despise him, what would he think?

I have received a note from the Comtesse Hohenlinden, which I send to you. What a world we live in!

“ *Ma chère* Caroline, poor dear Lord An-

Annandale has informed me of the shocking conduct of *miladi*. Now that it is all discovered, and the whole town talking of nothing else, it will be very improper in you to stay a single hour under the same roof with a person who has compromised her reputation so dreadfully. She will, of course, be cut by every one; and few will pity a lady who was so very prudish and severe towards others. I shall be charmed to receive you, *ma chère, chez moi*, and have ordered an apartment to be prepared. The carriage shall convey you from Annandale House at any hour you will name. I should in person conduct you hither, but I have such a horror of coming in contact with that very naughty woman, or of being even supposed to enter Annandale House while she remains in it, that I dare not go to you. The *comte* is, and with reason, extremely particular that I should not commit myself by associating with

any one whose reputation is tainted ; and I, also, am fully aware of the necessity of preserving appearances, and not violating *les convenances* on which the preservation of society so wholly depends.

“ I have had a conclave of ladies with me this morning to consult on this terrible affair. Lady Castlemartin declares, that if we do not shew a proper severity towards Lady Annandale, husbands will begin to suspect that their wives are lenient from a sympathy with the delinquent. *A-propos de* Lady Castlemartin, she is just now greatly annoyed ; for her friend, Lord Eaglesfort, has thrown off her chains, and is about to put on those of Hymen. She is *très en colère* with him ; but, I think, not indisposed to transfer her affections to the Marquess of Nottingham, should he be disposed to console her.

“ But, to return to our conclave. Lady F.

says, that if we wish to preserve our own liberty, we must shew no mercy to those who manage so ill as to be detected ; thereby, more or less, compromising all their *clique* : and Lady H. advises, that we at once renounce, not only Lady Annandale, but any woman who countenances her. You will thus, *chère* Caroline, see the necessity of at once leaving Annandale House ; and I will take care to have it well understood, that you declined seeing its mistress from the moment you heard of her guilt.

“ I have written to ask poor dear Lord Annandale to dine with us *en petit comité*. I do so pity him ! such a good and kind husband as he was, and so anxious to make his house agreeable ; always filling it with the most fashionable people in London. How happy that silly woman might have been, had she only had proper tact ! I lose all patience in thinking of her folly.

“ *Adieu — au revoir ! votre amie.*”

What think you of *notre frau gräfinn's* prudery? Is it not amusing? I have detailed all this to you, to postpone relating the painful scene to which I referred at the commencement of my letter, as children put off their tasks until the last moment. *Eh bien, donc, ma chère*, in defiance of Lord Annandale's and the *comtesse's* counsel, not to communicate with Augusta, I went to her dressing-room. I had not seen her last evening, as she sent to say she was too unwell to receive a visit from any one; so I passed the evening listening to the vows of her *caro sposo*, who expresses the utmost impatience to be freed from his present matrimonial fetters, that he may be enabled to put on others, as he says, more to his taste. I found poor Augusta as pale, and nearly as lifeless, as a statue, with an expression of anguish and despair in her countenance, that

might have melted a more stubborn heart than mine. How truly did I wish at that moment that I could accomplish my own schemes without occasioning her a moment's pain! *Mais, hélas!* that is impossible. I am a strange creature: ready to plot, but not capable of beholding the sufferings I inflict without a regret: I have not firmness to resist evil, nor hardness enough not to repent yielding to its dictates. I tried to comfort her; but she shook her head, and said,—

“ You surely do not know the crime with which I am charged, Caroline, or you could not attempt to console me.”

I told her, as gently as I could, that I was fully aware of it; and I saw her shudder as I made the avowal.

“ You do not, then, believe me guilty?” asked she. “ No, you do not, you cannot think so ill of me!”

I could not resist expressing my conviction of her perfect innocence (who so well knows it as I do ?); and, as she passionately pressed my hand, she burst into a paroxysm of tears, which seemed to relieve her. This little act of confidence and endearment produced such a revulsion in my feelings as to make me wish to throw myself at her feet, and confess the deep injury I had inflicted on her. Tears came to my eyes, and this emotion increased her confidence towards me.

“ Lord Annandale,” she continued, “ has written to say that he can establish my guilt by proofs that admit of no doubt. What they are I know not ; I only know — and the God who hears me can be witness of my solemn averment ! — that a thought of guilt has never entered my mind.” (And well do I believe it.)

“ But, dear Augusta, if, by producing

proofs which, however innocent you are, can establish grounds for a divorce and restore you to liberty, enabling you to marry the person you love ——”

“ Then you are acquainted with my weakness,” interrupted she, blushing a deep red ; “ that whole, sole, and involuntary crime, of which I am guilty? Oh, Caroline! how little do you know me, if you imagine that, branded with guilt, though conscious of my innocence, I could bring shame and disgrace to the man I loved. Were I free to-morrow, no power could compel me to become the wife of the person to whom you allude: and if, indeed, you have any respect left for me, never again refer to the possibility of such a measure.”

“ But *he*, knowing your innocence, and being aware that it was his too conspicuous attentions which have involved you in this dilemma — he, surely, loving you, as I am fully

persuaded he does, would vanquish your unreasonable scruples, and reason you into accepting the happiness that, as his wife, may, and will, I trust, still be yours."

"Never, never! Think you, Caroline, that I would so far justify the odious, the abominable charges of which I am accused, as to wed the object of them?"

I would have replied, but she entreated me with such earnestness never to touch on the painful, the humiliating subject again, that I ceased to urge her; convinced, from her whole tone and manner, that one of the hopes which had hitherto actuated me, and palliated, in my own estimation, the scheme I had pursued (namely, the hope of her marrying the Marquess of Nottingham), would now be frustrated: and this conviction brought a pang of remorse and regret to my heart, of which I had not thought it capable.

The truth is—but, alas! I have ascertained it too late—I have totally misjudged Augusta's character, and miscalculated the effect that my plan would produce on her. I judged her by the generality of women I have known; all of whom would have gladly escaped from the thralldom of a marriage with a man unloved, to the happiness of a union with the object of their affection, even though that happiness was purchased at the price of an *esclandre*, such as now awaits Augusta. I have hitherto disbelieved in female virtue, imagining it to be a chimera, or, at best, a principle that rarely, if ever, opposed an insuperable barrier to the temptation of love. But I now see my error, and I tremble at having been the means of destroying the peace of mind of this young and innocent being; now that I am aware she will not accept the panacea that I hoped would have given her repose. Would that I had

never interfered in this business, or that I had sooner acquired the knowledge of Augusta's character, which now begins to dawn on my mind ; for, selfish as I confess myself to be, I do believe that I should never have thought of sacrificing her repose to attain the fulfilment of my own views.

I felt like a culprit before this injured creature, still nearly a child in years ; and, when I beheld the expression of anguish imprinted on her beautiful face, and reflected how many years she may be condemned to drag on a life of sorrow, I shrank before the consequences of my fatal scheme, and could have wept over my victim.

Her father and mother now entered the room ; and my heart sank within me as I witnessed the change effected on their appearance within a few hours. Long, long years seemed to be added to their age ; and grief,

which is always so affecting in the old, was stamped on their brow.

“ I am innocent ; indeed I am innocent, dear father and mother ! ” exclaimed Augusta, throwing herself into their arms.

“ We know that you are, my child ! ” replied her father, pressing her fondly to his heart. “ We never, for a moment, doubted you ! ” sobbed her weeping mother, clasping her fondly to her maternal bosom.

“ Come, my precious Gusty, ” said Lord Vernon ; “ come to your home. Would to God that you had never left it ! I cannot bear that you should stay an hour longer beneath the roof of one who could suspect your purity, or who could prove himself so unworthy of the treasure we confided to him. ”

“ Yes, my father, I will go, ” replied Augusta ; “ but let me first see the dear child : ” and she burst into a flood of tears ; for, even at

this moment, she could forget her own grief to pity the poor boy, who was again doomed to the neglect from which she had rescued him.

The child was brought ; and when he saw her, he rushed to her arms, clasping her round the neck with all his strength, and covering her tear-stained cheeks with kisses. She anxiously recommended him to the nurse's care, promising to reward her if she fulfilled her duty towards him faithfully ; and dismissed not the child and his weeping attendant without tears, that attested her attachment to the poor boy, who could hardly be forced from her arms, to which he fondly clung.

Lady Vernon now instructed the *femme de chambre* to convey her lady's wardrobe to Grosvenor Square ; and then said, —

“ You will come with us, Caroline, will you not ? as this is no longer a fit residence for you.”

I told her that I was immediately leaving town, as my aunt had sent for me.

“What, sent for you already?” asked Lady Vernon, her pale cheek suffused with the blush of wounded pride.

“Caroline was to have gone, even if—— (here Augusta paused) for her aunt is ill.”

The worthy old couple pressed my hand kindly, and hoped I should find my good aunt better.

“Come, my child, let us leave this house,” said Lord Vernon, — “I cannot breathe freely in it.”

The *femme de chambre* brought a cloak and bonnet for Lady Annandale, which I assisted her to put on, my hands trembling so violently that I could hardly perform this little service.

“Put on a black veil,” whispered Augusta, her voice nearly choked by emotion; and then, embracing me tenderly, she left the room,

supported by her father and mother. That embrace made me shudder! Was not mine the Judas-kiss? I followed her, with the vague purpose of imploring her pardon — of, perhaps, confessing how deeply I had injured her; but she had already reached the vestibule, in which all the servants were marshalled, and I shrank from exhibiting myself before them in my present state of agitation. I ran to the front drawing-room window, to catch one more glance of her: my heart melted with pity and remorse. She was on the steps, slowly descending with tottering pace, when the Comtesse Hohenlinden and Lady Castlemartin drove up to the door. They stared rudely at poor dear Augusta, without, however, bowing to her (how I hated them both at the moment!); and when Lord Vernon's coach had disappeared, both ladies entered the house, demanding to see me.

“ *Imaginez-vous, ma chère Caroline*, to what my friendship for you has exposed me!” said the *comtesse*, as she hurried into the room.

“ Yes, indeed, it was quite dreadful!” interrupted Lady Castlemartin; “ only fancy our having met that very shocking person, Lady Annandale, who was descending the steps when we drove up! She looked at us positively, as if she expected us to bow to her; but we, naturally, took not the least notice of her: and, would you believe it, she was rouged up to the eyes — I saw it even through her veil!”

“ *Et ce pauvre cher Lord Annandale!*” resumed the *comtesse*; “ he is, indeed, much to be pitied, to have been so abominably deceived by such an artful, designing prude.”

“ I dare say she will try to persuade Lord Nottingham to marry her as soon as she is divorced,” drawled out Lady Castlemartin;

“but she may be assured that, even if he should commit such a folly, she will never find herself again admitted to our circle. No; we must really establish a *cordon sanitaire*, to exclude all tainted persons from coming in contact with us.”

What will you say, *ma chère amie*, when I tell you, that this same Lady Castlemartin is openly accused of a plurality of lovers? Yet this is the woman who would exclude the pure and high-minded Augusta from society, because she believes her to have had one! I felt so indignant with both of them, that I could with difficulty restrain the expression of my sentiments; though, to effect any good by revealing them, would, I well know, be a vain hope.

“Finding that you did not answer my note,” resumed the Comtesse Hohenlinden, “I determined on coming here to seek you.

I had inferred, from a billet I received last night from poor dear Lord Annandale, that that dreadful person would have left his house early this morning ; but, not thinking it right to come here alone, I called on Lady Castle-martin to accompany and *chaperon* me."

"I hope no one will discover that we have been here," said Lady C. "Fancy how shocking it would be to get shewn up in the Sunday papers ; and be, perhaps, accused of visiting that dreadful person who has just left the house !"

"Pray, get on your things, *ma chère* Caroline," said the *comtesse* ; "for the sooner we go the better. Your apartment is quite ready *chez moi* ; so let us depart."

When I told the *comtesse* that I was immediately leaving town to proceed to my aunt's, she could hardly credit me ; and when she found I was determined to fulfil this re-

solution, in defiance of all her advice and entreaties, she seemed displeased.

“ *Imaginez-vous, ma chère, à quoi vous vous exposez,*” said she, “ in remaining a single hour beneath the roof of a man who may now be considered in the light of a *garçon!*”

“ I expect the carriage that is to convey me to the country every moment,” I replied ; “ so you need be under no apprehensions for my reputation.”

“ In that case I will remain with you until you depart,” resumed the *comtesse*, who, I believe, has latterly become jealous of me, from having observed Lord Annandale’s attentions ; and, as she announced this intention, down she sat.

I rang the bell to quicken my preparations ; and, having addressed a few lines to Lord Annandale, to say that he might write to me at my aunt’s, I left the house, attended

by my *femme de chambre* ; the *comtesse*, and her prudish *chaperon*, having waited to see me drive off before they took their departure.

I am now writing to you from the inn, *en route*, where I stop for the night. I anticipate, with no slight dread, a long and *triste séjour* at my aunt's ; but a visit to her is, nevertheless, the most prudent measure I could adopt. I suppose it will be a year before the divorce can be obtained. What an age to look forward to spend in that castle of dulness, the *chateau de madame ma tante* ! *Plaignez moi, chère amie, et écrivez souvent à votre*

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
EARL OF DELAWARD.

A FEW lines have just reached me, my beloved, from Lady Vernon, saying that Augusta is separated from her husband, and dangerously ill at their house. She adds, that Lord Anandale has impeached the honour of his wife, and intends seeking legal redress against Lord Nottingham. You see our worst fears, as to poor Augusta's unhappy marriage, are more than realised; but so confident do I feel of her integrity, that I am fully persuaded she is perfectly innocent of this vile charge. I wish to go to her, my dear Charles, for it is on occasions like the present that the countenance of a friend can be of use; and I am quite sure you will give me your sanction to proceed to London. How I lament that you are absent at this crisis! for your presence would be a

solace to poor dear Lord and Lady Vernon,
and a blessing, as it always is, to your own

MARY.

P. S. I send this by an express, and hope
to hear that your poor uncle is better.

THE EARL OF DELAWARD TO THE
COUNTESS OF DELAWARD.

How I regret being absent from you at this
moment, my own Mary! I entirely approve
your going to your unhappy friend; and agree
with you in thinking, that it is when those who
are dear are in affliction, that friends should
prove that they are not mere pretenders to
the name. Pray, take care of yourself, for my
sake, dearest: nothing short of the present
emergency could induce me to allow you to

undertake this journey alone; so let me implore you to be careful of your health. My poor uncle is so much worse, that I fear all will soon be over.

Angels guard and bless my Mary,

Prays her fond husband,

DELAWARD.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
EARL OF DELAWARD.

I ARRIVED here much less fatigued than could be expected, my beloved Charles; and found poor Augusta dangerously ill with a violent fever. She knows no one, raves incessantly, and the physicians entertain great doubts of her recovery, unless a speedy change occurs in the disease. Her unhappy father and mother are in a state of mind impossible to be described.

My arrival affected them to tears ; for they looked on it, and with reason, as a proof of my perfect conviction of her innocence.

“ You do not, then, believe our child guilty ? ” said Lord Vernon.

“ Never could I harbour such a belief for a moment,” answered I ; “ for I have known her too long and too well.”

“ Bless you for that ! ” replied Lady Vernon, bursting into tears.

They say that, for the first two days after she left Annandale House, she appeared tranquil, but terribly depressed in spirits. At the expiration of that time, a packet of newspapers, one or two vile caricatures, and a coarse anonymous letter, were brought to her ; after the perusal of which she was seized with violent fits of trembling, and an acute pain in the head, which the physician pronounced to be an attack of brain-fever, induced by severe

mental anguish. I have just been sitting by the bedside of the sufferer, and her ravings have shocked me.

“ Do not let Lord Nottingham learn that I loved him, I implore you ! ” she repeatedly utters. “ It would be dreadful were he to know my affection ; I never could see him again. Oh, why am I married ? Mary Delaward said, that married women must not have male friends. Do not, in mercy, tell her that I love him ! She never would look on me again, were she made acquainted with my guilt. Oh, Caroline, do not leave me alone with him, for I tremble lest he should look at me, and discover the passion that is consuming me ! Do not tell me that he loves me ; say, rather, that he hates me ! Yet, no — repeat once, only once again, that he loves me, and then let me die ! Who said that I was innocent ? Oh, it was my

father and mother : I remember it now. But they did not know that I loved Lord Nottingham ; if they did, they would think me guilty, and hate me. Do not, do not reveal the dark secret to them ; but let it be buried with me when I am hid in the grave ! Burn all those horrible newspapers — all — all ! suffer not one to escape. See ! they are posted on every wall, every house — on the trees — ay, and on the clouds ! and the whole world are reading them, and chattering, and jibbering, and screaming my name ; and the trumpets are proclaiming it all through the earth, and every finger is pointing at me ! Oh, 'tis dreadful ! Hide me — hide me — deep, deep in the earth ; ay, even in the dark grave !”

It is thus, my beloved, that she has raved during the two hours I have been sitting by her bedside ; and so piteous are her accents, that they have pierced my very heart. My

fears are verified. She loves Lord Nottingham ; but this unhappy passion is the extent of her error, as all her ravings denote. The revolting statements in the papers, so cruelly sent to her, have overpowered her already excited mind. Poor dear Augusta, with all her youth, beauty, and innocence!—bitterly has she atoned for her indiscreet, her fatal choice of a husband!

She has been more tranquil for the last three hours, and has now fallen into a calm sleep. God grant that she may be relieved!

To-morrow you shall hear again from your
own

MARY.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
EARL OF DELAWARD.

My poor suffering friend had a quiet night, and awoke in her senses; though so languid as to create serious apprehensions for her life. She asked who was in the room. I made signs to her maid to answer: she, however, had fallen asleep; so I was forced to address to her two or three words of reply, but in a low tone.

“Do I still dream?” she demanded; “surely I know that voice. Is that Mary Delaward?”

“Yes, dearest Augusta, it is your early, your fond friend.”

She tried to take my hand, but had not strength to effect her purpose. She then motioned to me to withdraw the curtain, and, when I had complied with her wish, she looked

at me with an expression of such deep tenderness and anguish, that I felt nearly overpowered.

“ *You, Mary, have not believed me the guilty, the lost creature, they would fain make me appear. No; the good and pure are slow to condemn.*”

“ Do not speak now, dearest Augusta,” said I; “ and, if possible, do not think, until you have regained some portion of your strength.”

She shook her head, and answered,—

“ That will never be. Oh, Mary! you know not what I have suffered: to have brought shame to the brows of my dear father and mother; to be returned to their honourable roof dishonoured; to have hundreds—nay, thousands, believing me all that my very soul abhors, and my name coupled with crime! Yes, I feel it has broken my heart;” and she sank

her head on the pillow, exhausted by her emotion.

“ But all who know you, dearest Augusta, are convinced of your innocence ; they never, for a single moment, doubted it.”

“ Bless them for that belief !” she replied ; “ it is the only drop of balm in the cup of sorrow I have nearly emptied. Yet, dear and true friend, this is no time for deception ; you must not think me better than I am. Though free from actual guilt, or even from the thought of it, I have allowed ” (and here her pale cheeks became suffused with the deepest red) “ an unhallowed passion to usurp my heart, to dethrone my reason. Was not this a crime, and of deep die ?”

“ We are all weak and fallible, my dear Augusta ; but the Almighty is merciful, and pardons the involuntary errors of his frail

creatures, when they have stopped short of guilt, or by deep repentance atoned for it."

"Another sin, also, presses heavily on my soul. Regardless of your wise counsel, I closed my eyes to the good qualities of him I wedded; and, viewing his weaknesses through the medium of prejudice, exaggerated every defect, instead of, by affectionate kindness, endeavouring to amend them. He was not harsh, or unkind; even my coldness he bore with patience; and who knows, if I had evinced a better feeling towards him, whether he might not have become a more worthy and rational being?

"Had I avoided the society of him for whom I felt this engrossing, this culpable sentiment, the moment I had discovered my weakness, I should not have given room to the disgraceful suspicions that have for ever sullied

my fame. But, no—I courted danger; and, heedless of my reputation, and of the peace of mind of those to whom I was dear, I continued to receive his daily visits; and have now nothing to oppose to the charges which appearances furnished by my folly justify, except assertions of innocence, which those only who love me will credit. Think of the ignominy of a public trial! All the odious, the revolting disclosures of domestic privacy, thus laid open to the coarse and the vicious, who are but too prone to believe the worst. To have one's name made a by-word—a mockery—a shame! Oh, Mary! what woman could bear this degradation, and live?"

“ But you, dearest, are innocent, and your innocence will be made manifest to the world.”

“ Could that innocence be questioned, Mary, if I had not encouraged habits of intimacy, which, now that I calmly look back

and reflect on, were too decided and too conspicuous not to originate suspicions derogatory to my honour? What would, or what could be thought, when it becomes known that I, every day, spent whole hours in his society, frequently quite alone? No acquittal, could I hope for one, could console me for the appearances of guilt which my own imprudence has created; and I feel that, in thus disregarding propriety, I have sinned against virtue, by furnishing cause for suspicion and evil example."

I tried, but in vain, to speak comfort to her; she is so impressed with a sense of the faultiness of her own conduct, to which alone she attributes all that has occurred, that it is impossible to console her. What a wife would this dear creature have made, had she fallen into good hands! When I think of her youth (she is not yet seventeen), and see the delicacy

and purity of her mind, the freedom from all rancorous passions,—evinced by her entire abstinence from any condemnation of the husband who proved so unfit a guardian for the treasure confided to him,—and the severity with which she judges her own conduct, I cannot repress the bitter feelings that arise in my breast.

The action is already commenced, and of this she was apprised by a statement in one of the papers so cruelly sent to her. I tremble for its effect on her in her present weak state. Lord and Lady Vernon are nearly stunned by the weight of this heavy blow; for their very existence seems bound up in their child.

Adieu, my beloved! Ever your own

MARY.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

My reception from my aunt was as disagreeable as I anticipated, *ma chère amie*. She suspects that there is some hidden motive for my return, and has assailed me with a thousand questions. When she learns the cause, she will be furious; for she always seems prepared to judge me as unfavourably as possible on every occasion, and loves Augusta so much, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to persuade her that *she* could do, nay, dream of, wrong.

I asked Augusta to write to me, but she has not yet complied with my request: I have a fearful presentiment that she is ill; and this apprehension haunts me so continually, that there are moments when I would

give worlds that I had never interfered in her ill-assorted marriage, or plotted for its annulment. I have heard from Lord Annandale, who says he has put all *en train* for the action. I threw his letter from me with dislike and contempt; yet it is to wed this man that I have stooped to destroy the reputation, perhaps the peace of mind, of one of the most faultless of her sex! And yet, how far less unworthy is he than am I! for he is the dupe of my vile artifice, and knows not that his wronged wife is innocent. We are strange creatures; for I, who have the heart and head to plot against Augusta, have not the courage to contemplate the possible results of my scheme. Should she continue as wretched as when I saw her, or should she die——But I will not, dare not, anticipate so fearful a catastrophe—a catastrophe that would preclude me from ever again knowing a moment's peace.

I am become strangely nervous of late; my sleep, too, is troubled by dreams, all of which have Augusta for their object. I see her ever, with that pale, but beautiful face, which reproaches me for having wronged her. A thousand recollections of her affection and confidence rise up to upbraid me; but, above all, the memory of the noble manner in which she received my assertion of innocence of the charge, but too well founded, of my first and fatal error.

Now that the hope, which has hitherto cheered me, of eventually securing her happiness in a union with Lord Nottingham, has disappeared, the consciousness of the atrocity of my guilty scheme weighs heavily on my mind. Would to Heaven I had never entered on it! Too late I feel that I did not comprehend this pure-minded woman: I believed her, like too many of those we have known, incap-

able of resisting the dangerous ordeal of love. But even this almost omnipotent passion she has partly vanquished ; for the sentiment, in her, partook of the purity that characterises her so peculiarly ; and, though she could not entirely extirpate it, yet it could not pervert her noble nature.

Yes, I now begin to be aware that virtue and passionate love may abide together in the female heart ; and that those who, like me, have been doubtful of the existence of the union, only because they had been too stubbornly blind to observe it, may live to discover and deplore the pernicious fallacy of their system. I look back on the days of my early youth with horror, stained with one degrading crime, the consciousness of which has blighted every hope, and rendered torpid every virtue. All my thoughts addressed to the concealment, instead of being directed to the correction, of

errors, how have I strayed from the path of truth and peace ! Yes, I cannot disguise from myself that I am despicable ; and to you alone, who have been a witness, nay, a partaker, of the sins of my early youth, dare I draw aside the dark veil that shrouds them from others, and relieve my oppressed heart by the disclosure of its torments.

How could I live in intercourse with Augusta for months without discerning the delicacy and purity of her mind ! Fool, fool that I was, to imagine that the power of bestowing her hand where I know her heart is placed, would console her for the loss of fame ! Many — too many women would be so consoled, but she is not of them ; and I am sensible, too late, that I have, by my wicked, my inhuman scheme, destroyed her peace of mind for ever.

A letter has just been given to me : its contents have almost made me expire with

horror. Fancy my feelings, Delphine, when I tell you that the artful and vicious man who betrayed me in early youth, and who has avoided me ever since — he who, not content with triumphing over my virtue, exposed my infatuation and shame—is now in England! yes, even here, within a short distance — poor, degraded, and desperate. All that Florestan had heard of his ruin is but too true. He has spent the whole of his small fortune, and has exhausted all resources except the infamous one he now adopts, of compelling me to marry him, under pain of disclosing all to my aunt, and to the world. He has ascertained that my aunt is rich, and that I am considered heiress to her wealth. This is his inducement to his present plan; and I know too well of what he is capable to doubt his putting his threat into execution. What am I to do? where turn for support in this fearful dilemma? He says

he will arrive at the post-town nearest this to-morrow ; and that, if I do not meet him, he will directly seek my aunt, and inform her of all his rights over me.

Oh, Heavens ! what is to become of me ? who will, who can, protect me from this unprincipled, ruthless being ? How I shudder at the thoughts of beholding him, knowing how wholly I am in his power ! I am overpowered by terror, and feel a faintness that compels me to leave this unfinished.

Delphine, I have seen this man, and loathe him as never mortal loathed another. Yes, I abhor him and despise myself — oh, how immeasurably ! — that I could ever have liked such a wretch. The long years that have elapsed since I knew him, he has evidently passed in a career of vice and profligacy, that has rendered him as hideous and disgusting

as he was once the reverse. His manners, too, have fallen with his fortunes ; for they are low and brutal beyond any that I ever witnessed, and he appears to be reduced to the most extreme poverty. Such was his attire, that I trembled at being seen by any of the peasants in the vicinity conversing with him.

We met in a retired lane outside the park-wall — a place of rendezvous that he indicated to me in a note, soon after his arrival, when he had reconnoitred the precincts of this abode. The person who brought his letter told the footman, that he believed it was a petition from a poor foreigner in distress. Luckily I was alone when it was given me ; for had my aunt been present, her suspicious eyes would have detected my emotion. I stole to the appointed place like a culprit, and there I found him. Oh, Delphine, had you seen him! -- his face bloated and flushed from the

effects of intemperance ; his figure attired in a suit of tawdry and threadbare clothes, yet still aiming at fashion ; his whole air resembling Frederick le Maitre in *Robert Macaire*. A gilt chain was drawn conspicuously through the button-holes of a showy, but soiled waistcoat ; an old hat on one side of his tangled locks ; and a cigar in his mouth : but to the expression of his countenance there is no doing justice. The mixture of cunning and reckless daring — oh, it was fearful !

He addressed me in a tone of easy familiarity, calling me his *bonne amie*, his *chère Caroline*. “ Time,” said he, “ has dealt more leniently by you, Caroline, than by me ; for play, infernal play ! tries faces as well as purses ; and both, *sacre Dieu !* have suffered with me. But you appear cold, reserved — not glad to see me. How is this ? Come, come, *ma belle*, we must be better friends ; for

I am, as you know, a sort of husband, and, as such, entitled to certain privileges:" and the wretch positively attempted to embrace me. Oh, God! the degradation of that moment punished half the evil actions of my life.

"Stand back!" I exclaimed, hoarsely, half choked by indignation.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he said, "*mademoiselle* seems disposed to act *la fière*;" and he burst into a contemptuous laugh: "it is a pity that she was not always so prudish. But let that pass: I am not come here to play the lover; such mummary was well enough when *mademoiselle* was younger, and better worth the trouble—but now it is different. The years that have elapsed since we parted (for you, like myself, are not in your *première jeunesse*, though, *en vérité, très bien conservée*) have mended *your* position, and injured *mine*. You are the heiress of a rich aunt; I am the heir of naught but what the

gaming-table has left me, which consists of but a few shillings: for Fortune is even more fickle than your sex, and has played me more scurvy tricks than all womankind put together. England is not the place to live in without money; and, as I mean to live, money I must have: I have, therefore, determined to render a tardy justice to your honour by espousing you, and to act the affectionate nephew to your aunt, do the honours of her *triste château*, turn *chasseur*, *fermier*, *gentil-homme Anglais*, *et bon père*, *peut-être*, *par-dessus le marché*."

I listened to him, nearly overpowered by disgust and horror; for his words were accompanied by a coarseness of gesture, and reckless impudence of manner, that appertain only to the lowest and vilest of men. The word *crapulous* is the only one that can adequately describe his appearance.

“ You have already exposed me,” answered I; “ for at Turin you basely betrayed my dishonour, without even concealing my name.”

“ Bah, bah! what of that?” replied he; “ who could help boasting of such a *bonne fortune*?”

To remonstrate with so utterly unworthy a person I felt would be useless; consequently, I continued to listen to his proposals until he had concluded, wishing that the earth might open and engulf him, or hide me from his sight for ever.

“ What you propose,” replied I, “ is too absurd to merit a reply. I would prefer exposure, disgrace — ay, even death itself, to a marriage with you!” and I looked the contempt I felt.

“ *Mademoiselle* is not complimentary; but the English are rarely polite, and her *séjour* in her native land has somewhat impaired the

tone *de bonne compagnie* that used to distinguish her when she desired nothing so much as a union with her humble servant (bowing mockingly). Your affection, *mademoiselle*, it would be ungrateful to doubt, after the proofs of it with which you formerly honoured me. I am still the same man on whom you bestowed your heart, and the very pretty person that enshrined it, at Florence, some twelve years ago. The only difference is, that I am twelve years older (and this misfortune you share with me in common), and that my wardrobe is less *recherché*, an inconvenience which is easily remedied. Some of your aunt's gold will soon metamorphose me into *un élégant*; and we shall, I flatter myself, make a very good-looking couple, even though we are *un peu passés*."

"I warn you," said I, "that, if you present yourself before my aunt, she will consign you to the police."

“ She will do no such thing,” answered he, coolly; “ for I have with me all the tender billets with which you favoured me in former days—billets which furnish such incontestable proofs of your *tendresse*, and the extent to which it led you, that I do not think an English prude would particularly like the infamy which the exposure of them would obtain for you. To preserve the reputation and the honour of her family unimpaired, your aunt will be disposed to grant me a *legal* right to the charms which her niece less ceremoniously yielded to me. The reason of my first seeking this interview with you was from a desire of sparing your feelings as much as possible. I want you to furnish me with a sufficient sum of money to enable me to come here in a manner becoming my birth, and your future husband. I shall, provided you do so, demand your hand, without making

madame votre tante au fait of our having anticipated her consent some twelve years ago. I will plead the force of a long attachment ; and you will, with *maidenly reserve*, acknowledge that your happiness depends on becoming my wife. She, like a good aunt, will yield to our wishes ; you will be made an honest woman, and I a happy husband, *sans doute*. Refuse compliance with this proposal, and I swear that I will see your aunt in my present guise, declare the position in which we stood to each other, and inform her of my intention of giving publicity to my right over you, unless she agrees to purchase my silence by the gift of half her fortune."

The craft, the audacity, and the villany of this hardened wretch, are, as you see, matchless. I am caught in his toils ; and escape is, I fear, hopeless.

" You are, perhaps, not aware," said I,

“ that my aunt’s fortune, which is not by any means large, is not entailed upon me, and that she may leave it to whom she likes.”

“ Yes, yes, I know all that,” replied he ;
“ I have made my inquiries.”

“ My aunt is far from being a fond one, as you seem to imagine, and would neither yield assent to my marrying you, unless you possessed a suitable fortune, nor consent to buy your silence at the price you name.”

“ We shall see, we shall see,” answered he ; and he turned in the direction of the park, leaving me transfixed with horror.

I called him back, almost maddened with the contending emotions of fear, shame, and hatred. Oh, God ! Delphine, what were then my feelings — what are they now ! I asked him to grant me a few hours to reflect ; and he yielded to my entreaty with the air of a man who makes a sacrifice.

“ *En attendant, ma chère,*” said he, “ I want money.”

I gave him the contents of my purse, consisting of a trifle only, at which he glanced contemptuously; observing, that it would scarcely furnish a copious repast and bed, of which he stood greatly in need. While he was secreting the money, I saw the handle of a poniard glittering in his breast; and I absolutely shuddered as I remarked the assassin-like scowl of his brow, which indicated no reluctance to use this concealed weapon. He noticed my agitation, and smiled.

“ What! you are alarmed at this?” said he, drawing forth the dagger. “ I never go without it; it has stood my friend more than once in times of need: but do not be frightened, it wages no war with women” — and he replaced it — “ though at one period, I flatter myself, and *you* seemed to be of my opinion, that I was a lady-killer: *mais tout celà est fini*

à présent ; et la seule dame que j'aime actuellement est la dame Fortune, qui est, entre nous soit dit, la seule qui m'ait résisté."

To have returned to the house for all the money that my desk contains, leaving him to loiter about the lane, would have exposed me to the risk of observation ; and to have sent the money to him by a servant, would have been nearly as dangerous. He has, therefore, proposed coming to-night, after all are in bed, when I am to give it to him from the window of the state dressing-room, which, fortunately, opens into the park.

What am I to do? Oh! I would give worlds to be near you at this moment ; to have your advice, and the protection of your husband, to shield me from this miscreant. He is quite capable of fulfilling all his menaces ; and my aunt is so rigid, that she never would forgive me were she to know what he threatens

to relate. I can write no more; my head is confused, and my heart is faint. Why, why did my evil destiny throw me into the power of this wretch?

I felt so overpowered during the whole evening by the interview of the morning, and the anticipation of that of the night, that my aunt, who seldom shews much interest about me, asked, with unusual kindness, whether I was unwell, and suggested different remedies for my alleged complaints. Touched by her kindness, I was almost on the point of throwing myself at her feet, and confessing the fatal error of my youth, and its consequences, when the newspapers were brought in. On what trifles does the happiness or misery of life sometimes hang! Half an hour later, and I could have had courage to reveal to her the fearful position in which I am placed. I would have implored her to send me away

out of England — any where — to avoid this hated wretch ; and she seemed so much more kindly disposed towards me, that she might have taken pity on my despair : but she had no sooner glanced over the papers, than her whole countenance changed, from its recent expression of kindness, to one of scrutinising curiosity and stern severity.

“ Now is the cause of your return explained,” said she ; “ as, also, why you appear so pale and agitated. Why did you not tell me that Lady Annandale was driven with ignominy from her husband’s home ? Yes, I see the cause ; the very day you left London ! You must have been privy to this disgraceful catastrophe ! Who knows how far your evil influence and counsel may have led to it ? for she was pure and guileless as an angel when she left her father’s roof. Caroline, if you have had aught to do in this affair, may God forgive you, but *I* never

will. You, who are so many years her senior, who have had such a knowledge of society and its dangers—why was it that you did not prevent this catastrophe? Yes, it will break the heart of her excellent parents to have dishonour stamped on their child!” and here my aunt burst into tears. “And, now I remember,” she resumed, looking at me with sternness, “how came it, that you yesterday received a letter franked by Lord Annandale? Are you so unfeeling, so faithless a friend, as to maintain a correspondence with the husband who drives Augusta from his house? for it is plain the letter could not be from her. Caroline, I have sometimes accused myself of judging you too harshly. Your irreligion, your levity, and want of womanly reserve, gave me a very bad opinion of you; but I never thought you capable of deserting your friend the moment that she most required the consolation

of your presence, or of keeping up a correspondence with the husband who has denounced her."

I attempted to explain, that, as she went to her father's, I thought it best to come home.

"Then you judged her guilty of the crime with which she is charged?"

I tried to answer an assent; but I could not utter the falsehood.

"How was it possible for her to be culpable even in appearance (for that she is so in reality no person shall ever make me believe)," pursued my aunt, "without your having perceived some impropriety of manner? And when you had perceived, why not have remonstrated and advised? If neither advice nor remonstrance availed, why not have left her house ere she herself was expelled from it? All this mystery must be explained, Caroline; and I warn you,

that, unless the explanation proves more satisfactory than I anticipate it will, you will find me a severe judge, and an implacable guardian. I loved Augusta Vernon from her birth, and would have preferred hearing that she was dead to having her name thus dishonoured."

So saying, my aunt rose from her chair and retired to her own room, leaving me overwhelmed with confusion and dread. I withdrew to my chamber, where I am now writing in a state of trepidation I have never before experienced. The great clock in the hall has tolled twelve. It seemed, to my excited feelings, to have a funeral sound; and I almost wished it was my knell, as even death would have been a relief in my present horrible position. The money I possess, not above twenty pounds, is wholly inadequate to procure even a temporary forbearance from my evil genius. The sale of all the trinkets I have would not

produce a sum sufficient to satisfy his rapacity. What, what will become of me? Hark! I hear the signal — *he* is at the window!

I descended to the state dressing-room, opened the casement in fear and trembling, and offered to hand him the money; but he thrust it aside: “What,” said he, “do you treat me as a mendicant?—*me*, who hold your reputation, your position even in this dwelling, in my hands? I must, and will enter the house — I have much to say to you.”

“Say it where you are!” I exclaimed; “for into the house you cannot, must not come.”

“We shall see,” he replied, and vaulted into the window, pushing me from it and closing it down.

I shook so violently that I could with difficulty support myself—my terror of him suggesting a thousand fearful thoughts.

“ Who would believe,” said he, looking at me with an expression of mingled mockery and malice almost demoniacal, “ that we two have been lovers ; that we have met in rapture, and parted with regret ? Who would imagine that the woman I see cowering and trembling before me, with averted eye and blanched cheek, has smiled with delight, and blushed love’s own rosy hue, when I have approached her ? Such are the metamorphoses wrought by time and circumstances ; and I — yes, even I — could be sad as I note them. But I am a philosopher, and only laugh at what occasions tears to others ;” and he laughed in a sort that caused my blood to chill.

“ Do not make a noise, I implore you,” said I ; “ for my aunt sleeps in the next room.”

“ And now to business,” he rejoined, without noticing my appeal. I handed him the money, which he eyed contemptuously, but, neverthe-

less, put it in his pocket; and, doing so, again I saw the handle of his poniard peeping forth, and shuddered at the thoughts it excited.

“Is this all your wealth?” asked he.

I answered in the affirmative.

“Why, what a stingy old animal your aunt must be! I shall make her more liberal, you may be sure. It is devilish cold here, *ma belle!*” resumed he: “no wonder you tremble; for even I, who am used to be less delicately lodged, am half frozen.”

As he thus spoke, he took from his pocket a leathern bottle, filled with some spirit, the odour of which was detestable, and emptied nearly half the contents of it into his mouth.

“I have discovered,” he continued, “at the village alehouse, where I lodge, that your statement is correct as to your aunt’s fortune not being settled on you—nay, more, it is said that she does not appear to feel any strong

predilection in your favour. There is no accounting for tastes, you know : every one may not admire you as much as your humble servant once did — nay, still does ; for, *en vérité*, you are still a monstrous fine woman.”

How I loathed him !

“ Now, as her fortune is wholly in her own power, she might take it into her head to bequeath it to some one less likely to do honour to it than we are ; and to drag on some tedious years in pleasing a stupid old woman, who, after all, may cheat one at last, is a *triste* affair. I know something of this sort of existence, for I tried it once. An old uncle, rich as Croesus, *bête comme un Anglais*, and capricious as a Parisian *belle*, took me to live with him as his adopted heir, at his old *château* near Turin. He kept an execrable cook, gave me bad wine and good advice, until I could stomach neither any longer ; consequently, took

French leave of him one night, disembarassing him of all the money in his *coffre fort* ; a good round sum, too, by Jove! But he, stupid old dolt, chose to resent this little *escapade* of mine as a heinous offence ; and, when he shortly afterwards died, left his fortune to another nephew, who could swallow bad dinners and good advice without murmuring, and prefer waiting patiently for a large fortune to anticipating a portion of it."

While he recounted this anecdote of himself, he was glancing round at the various articles of plate and furniture in the room.

"Every thing here indicates wealth," said he: "that silver-framed mirror, this silver basin and ewer, and the *nécessaire*," taking one of the large old-fashioned boxes from the *toilette*, and weighing it in his hand. "Do you know that there is a little fortune in this ap-

partment? Your aunt has, doubtless, diamonds of value?"

A vague dread that this question was only the prelude to some proposal of theft, induced me to answer in the negative.

"What! would you have me believe that the owner of the costly things before me has no diamonds? Bah! I know better; you are disingenuous, Caroline. Ye gods, how thirsty I am!" pursued he, having again recourse to his bottle; "it is the infernal bacon I partook of, by way of a supper, that has produced this insatiable thirst. *Apropos de souper*, how can you, *ma belle*, who have lived in civilised countries, exist on English cookery? Faugh! the recollection of it makes me sick! *Mais, revenons à nos affaires*. What do you intend? How are you to procure a sufficient supply of money to place me at my ease, and prevent

the necessity of my exposing you to your aunt ? I really have no malice against you, *ma chère* ; and, if I am compelled to any hostile measure, poverty alone will be the cause."

I told him that, except a few trinkets, all of which were at his service, I had nothing that could produce money.

"Where are they ? let me see them," replied he.

"They are in my bed-room, above stairs."

"Go for them : why do you hesitate ?"

I dared not tell him what was then passing in my mind, but he divined it.

"You are afraid to leave me here with these costly things," said he, pointing to the rich toilette-service ; "but I am ready to attend you to your bed-room, if you prefer this alternative : " and this was uttered with a glance that made me shudder.

I instantly took a light, and glided with

stealthy steps along the corridor, and up the stairs, leaving him in the dressing-room below.

It was several minutes before I could find the key of my jewel-case ; and when I did, in my trepidation, I could not open it for as many more. At length, having placed the trinkets in a large silk reticule, I left my chamber, but had only advanced a few paces when I heard a noise. I returned in terror to my room and locked the door, convinced that some one had detected the nocturnal visitor below. I listened in breathless terror ; but, finding all continue quiet, I again stole down stairs, and found him where I had left him, but with a face nearly as pale as my own, and nearly equally embarrassed in manner.

“ Did you hear a noise ? ” asked he, eagerly.

I answered in the affirmative.

“ What could it be ? ” demanded he, eyeing me scrutinisingly.

Having ascertained that I was ignorant of the cause, he hastily added,—

“ I think I had better depart ; there may be danger in remaining longer.”

“ But you have not seen the trinkets for which you sent me,” said I.

“ True, true,” he replied ; “ where are they ?”

I delivered to him the silk bag that contained them, which he snatched, saying,—

“ I will examine them another time, but now I am in a hurry. Adieu, Caroline !”

“ What are your plans ?” I asked, in fear and trembling. “ Do not, I entreat you, send any more notes here from the alehouse : a repetition of such a course must excite suspicion ; and my aunt is already but too much disposed to think harshly of me.”

“ She will think harshly of you no more,”

said he, and a change was visible in his countenance ; “ for I will never betray you to her.”

“ Promise me this !” I eagerly exclaimed.

“ I promise you,” he answered ; and there was a wildness and strangeness in his countenance that I had never before seen it wear.

“ I must go,” resumed he, hurriedly ; and he opened the casement and disappeared.

An oppressive weight seemed removed from my breast when I again found myself alone. I examined all the room ; for, to say the truth, I suspected that the visible change and trepidation of his manner arose from his having purloined some of the articles of massive silver which he seemed to examine with such longing eyes. I was the more inclined to this suspicion from having heard a noise, resembling that produced by the closing of a window, when returning to the chamber, which

led me to infer that he had placed something on the outside of it.

All remained, however, as I had left it; and it was a relief to me to find that he was not quite so base as I had suspected him to be. Having carefully fastened the shutters of the window, I stole back to my room; where, feeling too much agitated to hope for sleep, I have employed the rest of the night in detailing to you my nocturnal interview with this fearful man. What have I not still to dread from him! for I put no faith in his promises. The moment he has expended the scanty sum I have given him, and the amount of what the trinkets may produce, he will return here to denounce me to my aunt, from whose severity I can hope for no mercy.

It is strange what could have so changed his whole appearance and manner, while I was absent from the chamber. It could not have

been above half an hour altogether. I left him half intoxicated and reckless, impatient for the trinkets I offered him; and I found him pale as death, perfectly sobered, nearly as nervous as myself, and seeming to have quite forgotten the trinkets he had been so anxious to obtain! Could it be that any supernatural appearance produced this visible change? I feel a dread steal over me even at the supposition. Merciful Providence, if such things are possible! But let me conquer these painful creations of a distempered fancy.

Perhaps it was remorse for the infamous conduct he was pursuing towards me that struck some chord in his heart, and led to the change I observed. If so, and it operate to procure me a cessation of his visits and letters, I shall forgive him all the misery he has caused me within the last few hours — and bitter has it been. Oh! Delphine, could you

but see him as he is now—ruined, degraded, and steeped in vice of the lowest, the most disgusting kind; bearing in his flushed and swollen countenance the impress of habitual intoxication and brutal passions—how would you pity me at being condemned to associate with such a being even for a minute, and be treated by him on terms of perfect equality! When I saw myself in the power of this man, alone, and in the dead of night, a sickening sense of terror crept through my veins. Robbery, even murder, seemed possible, as I looked at his scowling and ferocious brow; but, dreadful as was this apprehension, it was feeble to that of his attempting any personal familiarity, to which death, in its most terrific shape, would have been preferable.

Oh! it is only when vice is thus unveiled before us in all its hideous deformity that we are struck with terror at the monster. We saw

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this man when youth and fashion rendered him more attractive than most of those who are now basking in the sunshine of favour with the giddy and unthinking of our sex. The germes of all the vices that have since ripened in his heart then existed ; but they were concealed beneath the varnish of personal refinement. The uncontrolled indulgence of his passions, and an utter selfishness, that rendered him regardless of their consequences to others, have brought this once gay and brilliant being to the lowest degradation ; and those who could smile at the vices of the fashionable sensualist turn with horror from the crude, undisguised, and unmitigated ruffian.

But is it for me to moralise on the crimes of others ?—I, who have plotted to destroy the virtue of the purest of her sex ; and, finding it immaculate, descended to the basest arts to compromise her reputation ! Augusta, you are

avenged ! for, though bowed down by sorrow, your innocent breast will never know a pang to be compared with the fierce ones inflicted by remorse.

Could I but once find myself freed from a life of dependence on my aunt, and in possession of a home and station in society, the rest of my life should be passed in the exercise of those virtues, the existence of which I have hitherto disbelieved, and the practice of which I have ever neglected. My views, opinions, feelings—all are changed. The veil that has heretofore obscured my vision has fallen for ever ; and I loathe the vices, however sanctioned by social convention, which I used to regard with such indulgence — nay, which I have so deeply shared.

Fatigue oppresses me, and the light of day has dimmed that of my expiring candle. Adieu !

Pity me, Delphine ! I am distracted — yet not sufficiently so to lose, for a moment, the sense of my misery. My aunt, my noble-minded aunt, was found dead in her bed this morning — murdered ! — her jewels stolen — her escritoire rifled ! Can you not divine by whom ? And *I* — *I* am the depository of this terrible, this fatal secret ! *I* it was who let the assassin enter ! *I* it was who told him where she slept ! *I* it was who, by my absence, gave him the opportunity of committing this fearful deed ; and *I* it was who secured the shutters of the window by which he retreated, thus fixing on some innocent person the suspicion of a guilt, the perpetrator of which I alone know ! Oh, God ! oh, God ! I shall go mad !

I was awakened from a feverish slumber by repeated knocks at my door. Having started from my bed to open it, my maid stood before me in breathless horror.

“Your aunt is dead — murdered, mademoiselle!” uttered she: “oh, mercy! what will become of us all?”

An instant conviction of who the murderer was, shot, like lightning, through my brain; and I fell fainting from the chair into which I had dropped a moment before. I must have continued insensible for a considerable time; for, on returning to a consciousness of my state, I found that I had been bled, and the family physician was exhorting those around me to be quiet.

“Is she, indeed, quite dead?” demanded I; “and have all means been tried to restore her?”

The doctor shook his head, and entreated me to be composed; but I was not to be silenced. Finding me obstinate, he told me that, on going to her room at the usual hour, her attendant found her mistress’ room in

great confusion : the drawers forced open and rifled of their valuable contents ; her escritoire broken, and a large sum of money which it had contained gone ; and my poor, poor aunt a lifeless corse, having been suffocated by means of a pillow, which was bound tightly around her face.

Her dying struggles then, Delphine, were the noise I heard : and even then, had I descended, it might not have been too late to save her. But, selfish as I was, I thought only of the danger which threatened myself by a discovery of that monster in the house, and left my poor helpless aunt to be his victim. Now are the change in his looks and manner, his carelessness of my trinkets, and his impatience to depart, all explained : now do I too well comprehend the words he uttered—
“ She will think harshly of you no more ; ”
“ I will never betray you to her.” Oh,

Almighty Powers! thus was I parleying with the assassin of my poor aunt, who was, perhaps, at that moment rendering her last sigh!

Am I not as culpable as the wretch whose murderous hands committed the foul deed? Without my aid, he never could have gained access to the house, which is so strongly secured as to defy danger. Surrounded by attached and faithful servants, she slumbered in safety until I gave entrance to her murderer, and, as it were, wilfully guided him to her chamber. I see her ever before me, struggling and writhing beneath his grasp; I hear her dying cry ever ringing in my ears; and the ruthless monster stands ever confronting me with that malignant and fearful scowl which his countenance wore last night.

I sometimes think I am growing mad, and tremble with new dread, lest I should unconsciously utter something that may betray the

fatal secret : at other moments I am strongly tempted to denounce the assassin ; but how do so without betraying the mode in which he gained ingress to the house, and whom it was that secured the window after his retreat ? No, I have not courage to meet the punishment I so fully merit ; and this fell secret must remain for ever buried in my breast.

The house is filled with magistrates and police. Several of the servants are arrested on suspicion : is not this, too, dreadful ? And *I*, who, with a word, could exculpate the innocent, must not, dare not, utter that word !

Yes ! the pangs I now endure must surely be a foretaste of that future punishment awarded to the guilty ; and conscience whispers that I merit it all. Would I were in my grave ! Yet, if beyond the grave, — as all I now feel too surely proves, — the sense of our crimes, and

their heavy penalty, await us, what hope have I of the oblivion I would seek ?

Such is the weakness to which my frame is reduced that I can scarcely move : violent pains in my head, and an aching of all my limbs, announce some serious malady. I will despatch this while I have yet strength to close it ; perhaps it is the last you will receive from the wretched

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
EARL OF DELAWARD.

How does it pain me, my beloved, not to be able to give you better tidings of my poor friend, knowing, as I do, the warm interest you feel in her ; and knowing, also, how much

you have need of consolation at present, with a dear relative in a state that admits not of the hope of his valuable life being prolonged many days. Alas ! poor Augusta's condition is nearly as hopeless ; her languor every hour increasing, and her form wasted nearly to that of a shadow. No complaint, no murmur, escapes her dear lips ; there is something more approaching to the idea we form of angelic natures in this lovely creature, than I ever before witnessed. Her beauty is positively radiant, but it is unlike the beauty of earth. Passion has left no trace on her polished brow ; and patience and meekness are depicted on every lineament of her lovely face. In gazing on her angelic calmness, it seems cruel to wish her life prolonged ; because it is impossible not to see, that this serenity is owing to her conviction that her recovery is hopeless.

When I have endeavoured to lead her mind

to the prospect of recovery, she has answered me,—

“ Do not wish it, dearest friend: with a stained name, how could I ever again know peace? My Heavenly Father, who alone is fully aware of the extent of my weakness, while pardoning that, will judge me more leniently than men; and in the grave I shall not meet the eye of scorn, nor have to shrink from the contempt of those who are too willing to believe all that malice can invent, or scandal propagate. The woman who has lost her honour should live to atone for her crime; but for her who has lost her reputation there is no refuge but death.”

When I think of this creature, now a breathing shadow before me, as she was a few brief months ago in the flower of youth and health, I turn with loathing from the corruption of the heartless and artificial society,

among whose rocks and shallows her peace has been wrecked. The only desire she manifests is to leave London, though her physicians think that she has not sufficient strength to bear the journey, however slowly performed; but she evinces such anxiety to undertake it, that her unhappy father and mother intend to suffer her to make the effort. A *dormeuse*, with additional springs, is preparing for her; and I trust that she will thus be able to reach the home of her childhood.

A strong sense of religion appears to have arisen in the mind of my poor dear Augusta; and its tranquillising effects are visible in all she says or does. It seems as though she considers the trials that have overtaken her as an atonement for her errors, and, as such, she shrinks not from enduring them; displaying a patience and resignation as touching as it is edifying.

Intelligence has just reached us of the death of poor Mrs. Wickenham, under the most harrowing circumstances : but as, doubtless, the papers will have apprised you of the dreadful event, I shall add no more. Lord and Lady Vernon are greatly afflicted by the appalling occurrence ; but we carefully conceal it from poor Augusta.

That ill-directed, and, I fear, wicked person, Miss Montessor, will now be left free from all restraint, and will be likely to make an improper use of her lately acquired liberty. Strong as is my antipathy towards her, I cannot help pitying her present forlorn and unprotected state ; and I hope her aunt has, at least, secured her a provision.

I shall accompany Augusta to the country, and think it likely we may set out in a couple of days. We shall make very short stages. How I long to see you again, my beloved !

and to assure you, once more, *vivá voce*, how entirely and fondly I am your own

MARY.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

SINCE I last wrote to you, *chère* Delphine, I have approached the gates of death. Would that I had entered them, instead of waking to life, with all the consciousness of intolerable and interminable misery. A violent fever assailed me soon after I despatched my last letter to you; and, during three weeks, I have been insensible to all around me. The most terrific visions haunted my excited imagination during that epoch. My murdered aunt seemed continually to stand before me, with

her face swollen and distorted by the assassin's grasp. The grisly ruffian, himself, too, was ever present; either dragging me to the altar, where grinning fiends officiated, or on the point of hurling me from some stupendous rock into the angry abyss of waters that yawned to drown me. Augusta—the wronged, the innocent Augusta—robed in white, interposed to save me; but the grim murderer, with a demoniac laugh, plunged a dagger in her heart.

Such were the dreadful phantoms that, during three long and dreary weeks, haunted my disordered mind, with a vividness so terrific, that even now I shudder at the bare recollection, and fear to sleep, lest they should return to appal me.

The steward of my aunt has been arrested, and thrown into prison, on suspicion of the murder. He, it seems, had paid into her

hands a large sum of money the day before this fatal event, the whole of which had disappeared, with her diamonds; and, as her possession of this sum was known only to himself, and that he slept in the house the night of the murder, he is, consequently, suspected, and viewed with abhorrence by all the neighbourhood. *He* is to stand his trial; and *I—I*, who alone could prove his innocence, must not dare to justify him. Is not this compulsory acquiescence, which may terminate in another murder, too, too dreadful? and where will end the painful consequences of my crimes?

The clergyman of the parish has been repeatedly to see me; for, my despair and illness have led those around me to attribute to grief the sufferings which are produced by horror and remorse. Consequently, I have met with a sympathy and kindness which I do not merit; and which those who evince it would

shrink with dismay from bestowing, did they but dream of the horrific truth.

It appears, that, on that fatal and never to be forgotten night, my poor aunt, impressed with a but too just presentiment of my falseness to Augusta, whom she so tenderly loved, added a codicil to her will, by which she revoked the bequest of her fortune to me ; and left me only two thousand pounds, vested in the funds, to be laid out in the purchase of an annuity for me. Even this circumstance has increased the sympathy and kindness of her friends and neighbours for me, — so that I find myself well treated by all. How little do I deserve it !

I have found two or three letters from Lord Annandale, that arrived here during my illness. He tells me that the action is advancing ; though the pretended illness of Lady Annandale was put forward by some of

her friends as a motive for retarding it. Good heavens! if she should be really ill! If I have this calamity, also, to answer for! It is — it must be so; were she not ill, she surely would have written to me, unknowing, as she still must be, of the odious, the wicked part I have taken in wounding her peace, and destroying her reputation. My mind is in a fearful state: I dare not anticipate the future — and I shudder at the past.

Here I cannot long remain; for a relative of my aunt, to whom she has bequeathed this place, will soon arrive to take possession of it, when I, of course, must depart. Had I inherited my aunt's fortune, I do believe that I should still have had the grace to have rendered justice to Augusta, by declaring to Lord Anandale the base and treacherous part I have acted towards her, and thus have stopped all legal proceedings against her; for I could then

have retired to France or Italy, to live in affluence and liberty, without depending, as I now must, on a marriage with Lord Anandale, which is my sole and last resource for securing that wealth and station, for the possession of which I have bartered my hopes of peace here, and pardon hereafter. Had I been born with the riches and rank for which, from my earliest youth, I have pined, I might have passed through life unstained by crime; for I am not worse disposed than the generality of my fellow-mortals: but the want of these, and the ungovernable desire to possess them, have plunged me in guilt too deep ever now to be expiated.

I sometimes endeavour to consider my recent transgressions as the result of the first crime which I perpetrated; and thus heap on the head of the vile wretch who incited me to it, the entire responsibility of my subse-

quent career. But I cannot wholly cheat myself with this sophistry; for, conscience whispers but too distinctly, that it was not *he* who urged me to counsel a young and inexperienced girl, while yet a mere child, to contract a marriage, when she had discovered that she was even more than indifferent to him who sought her hand: or to plot, alas! too successfully, against her happiness and honour, when she, unsuspecting of my treachery, was prodigally lavishing on me all the affectionate kindness of her gentle and noble nature!

How dreadful, how appalling it is, to be fully conscious of one's crimes! to tremble at their consequences, and to loathe one's baseness, yet be compelled, by force of circumstances, to persevere in the career of guilt!

Would that I could delude myself into a blindness of my own wickedness; or that the remorse which consumes me could atone for

past, and preserve me from future crimes. I sometimes think I am mad, and almost wish I were; for any physical suffering or debasement would be preferable to the fearful state of mind in which I exist.

Lord Annandale's letters inflict a bitter pang. When he praises the delicacy of my conduct towards my guilty friend, as he unjustly styles poor Augusta, contrasting it with that of the Comtesse Hohenlinden's, and the other ladies of her *coterie*, which has disgusted him, think what I must — what I *do* feel! Were he to know the truth, how would he loathe and spurn me! for he is only weak, and not malignant, and fully believes the culpability of his wife, or never would he have denounced her. Should he not live to discover her innocence in this world, there is another, where all secrets stand revealed; and *there* she will appear pure as angels, while I — oh,

God! I dare not contemplate this dreadful retribution.

My head is so confused, that I know not whether I told you that, at the inquest after the tragical death of my aunt, the person keeping the alehouse, where that monster took up his abode, came forward and stated, that for two days before the murder, a foreigner, of most suspicious appearance, had lodged at his house. That, on the day of his arrival, he had sent me a letter, which they supposed to be a petition; and that, during the day, he had loitered in the immediate vicinity of the park. That, on the night of the murder, however, he had not left the house, having retired to bed early, and only departed at seven o'clock the next morning.

How well do I recollect his telling me that, fearing to excite suspicion, he had fastened his door on the inside, and quitted the chamber

by the window ! It is harrowing to my feelings to hear my *femme de chambre* recount the belief entertained by the whole household and neighbourhood, of the guilt of poor Davenant, the steward ; an old and faithful servant, who stood peculiarly high in the esteem of his mistress. What adds to the appearances against him is, that on him was found a pocket-book, known to be purchased by my unhappy aunt but a few days before, and containing a hundred pound bank-note, with a pearl hoop-ring, recognised to be hers, and known by her attendant to have been in her possession the morning previous to her death.

He declares that these articles were given to him by my aunt. His daughter being on the point of marriage, his mistress presented him with a hundred pounds to add to her nuptial portion, and a ring for the intended bride.

All this he has protested, and all this I too well know to be true ; for my aunt named the gifts to me, with many commendations on his zeal and integrity in her service, when we were at coffee, the last evening of her life. But if I state this fact, may not suspicion fall on some one equally innocent ? I know not which way to turn, nor what to resolve ; but I sicken with horror at thinking that a second life may be the victim to the fatal position in which I find myself. Another circumstance that tells against this poor man is, that a considerable increase to the bequest already made him in my aunt's will was added in the codicil that terrible night. His unfortunate family are overwhelmed with despair : they alone believe him innocent ; but those who have known and esteemed him for years, have already pronounced him guilty, and execrated his ingratitude and villany.

How awful, how inscrutable, are the ways of Providence! While this innocent man is in a prison, awaiting, perhaps, an ignominious death, the real criminal is wandering at liberty with his ill-acquired wealth! Does not all this seeming anomaly *prove* a future state of reward and punishment? Too surely it does; and dreadful will be the condition of those in *that* life, who escape their punishment in *this*!

Would that I had the certainty that the assassin was out of England; for, much as I loathe him, and desire that his atrocious crime should meet a condign retribution, I tremble at the idea of his being arrested in this country, as I am convinced that he would not hesitate to compromise my honour, if not my safety, by denouncing me in some way or other. Think of the horror, the degradation, of knowing that one's safety depends on such a wretch! Oh! it is too, too dreadful!

How different has been your fate to mine, Delphine! yet both equally sinned in our early youth. The consequences of that one false step, which has plunged me in the fearful position in which I now stand, have been comparatively harmless to you, because the partner of your indiscretion was not, as in my case, a villain. Yet had Villeroi been my lover instead of yours, my poverty would have opposed an impassable barrier between us. He would have left me as the other did, to brave all the consequences of my crime; but he would not have added insult to injury. Your wealth, your station, would always have rendered your lover anxious to become your husband; and thus, that sin which has led to my ruin, has had no evil influence on your brilliant destiny.

Forgive me for thus comparing our different fates; like a drowning wretch, who catches at straws, I try to cheat myself into a belief

that I am not quite so guilty as conscience tells me I am ; but even this illusion is denied me ; for too plainly does reason whisper, that to my own turpitude alone do I owe the pangs I endure, and the future I tremble to contemplate.

Adieu, Delphine ! Pity your unfortunate friend,

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWÁRD TO THE
EARL OF DELAWARD.

YOU will, my beloved, I know, be desirous to learn how poor dear Augusta bore her first day's journey, and be delighted to hear that she has supported it wonderfully well. Her longing anxiety to get away from London, lent her, I do think, a factitious force, that has given birth to new hopes in the hearts of her

father and mother ; hopes which a sad presentiment assures me will never be realised. She begged so earnestly that we might leave London very early in the morning, that, to comply with her wishes, we were in the carriage by seven o'clock. Only a very few persons, and these of the humblest class, were visible in Grosvenor Square, as she was placed in the *dormeuse*, propped up by pillows ; but even from the glance of these she shrank with a dread that it was painful to behold.

I alone accompanied her in the *dormeuse* ; Lord and Lady Vernon preceding us in their travelling-carriage, and Augusta's *femme de chambre* and mine following us in a post-chaise. She was silent, and absorbed in meditation. While we passed through the street, and immediate environs of London, she kept her eyes closed, as if to shut out their view, though the blinds had been let down at her

desire, as she betrays the most nervous susceptibility at encountering the gaze of a stranger. When we had traversed the environs, she opened her eyes, and said,—

“ Now I can breathe more freely. I seem to have escaped from an atmosphere of humiliation and disgrace, where every eye mocked, and every tongue defamed me. Oh, Mary! you know not, and *you* never can know, the agonising consciousness of being the subject of general and disgraceful animadversion; of seeing caricatures portraying vice in its most hideous forms, stamped with your likeness; *bon mots* and equivoques the most contemptuous coupled with your outraged name; while the good deplore, and the wicked triumph, in your presumed criminality. All this *I* have felt and writhed under, until my tortured imagination has conjured the belief that the overwhelming sense of shame which was preying

on my soul, had fixed its burning brand on my brow. How — how I longed to be transported to some distant region, where my name had never been heard — my disgrace never been related; where I could again meet the glance of human beings without being crimsoned by the blush of shame. I was proud, Mary, too proud; — how has that pride been humbled! Will not every modest woman accuse me of bringing dishonour on my sex? Will not every immodest one cite me as a companion in vice? Think of a trial!”

“ But your innocence will be proved, dearest.”

“ Admitting this to be the result; through what a fearful ordeal does the virtue of a woman pass,—that virtue which should never be questioned, — when it is subjected to the odious, the defiling publicity of a judicial investigation! No! the burning ploughshare, over which

the female suspected of want of chastity was condemned to walk barefooted, as a mean of detecting the justice of the imputation, was a merciful penalty compared to that of the searing-iron of consuming shame which the notoriety of a *trial* inflicts on a sensitive mind. Then, to watch the struggles, to conceal grief and wounded honour, of those who were once proud of you; to know that their love and pity for one deemed impure, expose their own reputations to censure — oh! all this once felt, never can be erased from the memory, and poisons every thought, destroys every earthly hope! From such misery there is but one refuge — the grave; but one hope — the mercy of that God, who can distinguish between error and guilt, and can pardon her whom men condemn.”

It is in vain, my dearest husband, that I endeavour to lead her to take a less sombre

view of her position. Her womanly pride, and, above all, the extreme modesty peculiar to her character, have received wounds too deep, too deadly, ever to be healed; and, however her innocence may be proved, hers is not a nature to drag on a protracted life of fancied humiliation, or to submit to the capricious kindness of some, and the still cherished malignant doubts of others.

Could the young and fair of her own sex, who, unthinking of crime, recklessly expose themselves to its suspicion, behold this lovely and unhappy creature sinking into a premature grave as a refuge from shame, how would they tremble at even the approach of levity, or the semblance of impropriety of manner; and how carefully would they preserve that decorum which should ever be the outward and visible sign of the purity within!

The love of Augusta for her father and

mother, demonstrated in a thousand ways, is the most touching sight I ever beheld. It seems as if the cords that unite their hearts are drawn more tightly now that they are so soon to be rent asunder for ever. But even this tender affection makes her more alive to the sense of the wound inflicted on their peace — by the stain affixed to her honour. Yes; it is one of the peculiarities of the heart of woman, that the blow which most afflicts her, is that which must wound the hearts of those dear to her.

In compliance with the wishes of Augusta, we have chosen a different route to the direct one to Vernon Hall; consequently, we are unknown at the inns where we stop; and this privacy is a great relief to her feelings.

“What a blessing to die at home!” she often murmurs; “with no prating London physicians to describe to their fashionable and

idle valetudinarian all the symptoms of — a broken heart; no hireling domestics of a season to profane one's name at the adjacent alehouses; no newspapers to detail daily 'the little better,' and 'something worse,' of poor Lady A.; and no strange pastor to speak comfort to dying ears, or patience to agonised ones. No, blessed be God! I return to the peaceful home of my infancy, where no eye will glance suspicion, no tongue utter, no heart form it. Good Dr. Henderson will not make my malady the topic of his visits to his other patients. The gray-headed domestics, who have known me since my birth, will not talk lightly of me. Our provincial paper will not give the *on dits* of my health; and dear, good Doctor Wilmington, will smooth my passage to the grave, and best comfort those who are left to mourn for me."

She loves to dwell on her approaching

end, to which she continually refers, as persons do to a long and pleasurable journey which they are about to undertake. Nor does she neglect to prepare for it, by prayer, meditation, and the cultivation of a contrite spirit. I never saw a creature throw off the faults of human nature so wholly, or clothe her spirit in meekness and holiness, as she does hers. Once, and only once, since the first day of her return to reason, I have ventured to name Lord Nottingham. She became crimsoned with shame; and, after a moment's pause, begged me to mention him no more. Then, resuming, after an internal struggle, "yet, why should I conceal from you, Mary, now, that by a consciousness of my sin, and a deep penitence, which I trust in the Almighty has atoned for it, that I felt for him a guilty passion, which rendered me blind and heedless to the danger to which I was exposing my fame, by permit-

ting his daily visits. I was mad, infatuated — but dearly have I expiated that one sin. I trust that *he* never suspected my weakness; but, if he did, he never presumed. Nor did he insult me with a declaration of love; yet, a secret sympathy seemed to exist between us, that convinced me I was dear to him.

“ If I did not feel that my days are numbered, I would not wound your chaste ear, Mary, with this avowal of an unhallowed passion; but, it is right I should humiliate myself by confessing it, now that it is only remembered with contrition. Think of the degradation to which this sinful love exposed me, when I tell you that a person — ay, and a woman, too — attempted to console me for the shame, the ignominy to which I was reduced, by holding out to me the prospect of being divorced! Yes, Mary, divorced! and then — I blush while repeating it — I might

marry, as she said, the object of my affection. Was not this degradation? Yet, to this did I bring myself by my own infatuation."

Such are the reflections of this dear and suffering creature; which prove that she was formed, not only to live in purity, but to live unsuspected. I write to you while she is slumbering; but, even her dreams are haunted by the thoughts that occupy her when awake; for, I have heard her low, sweet voice, continually repeat,—“Indeed, I am not guilty! O, do not believe it!”

Much as I languish to have you with me, my beloved, yet I am not so selfish as to repine, knowing how your time is occupied; nor could I wish one hour of that life abridged, the continuance of whose frail tenure keeps you from

Your own

MARY.

THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
HENRY MORDAUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR MORDAUNT — All that the most gloomy imagination could have feared, has occurred — Annandale has commenced legal proceedings against me ; and my infatuated passion and imprudent attentions have plunged the pure and lovely object of them into a position the most humiliating to a noble nature like hers. Annandale must be the dupe to some plot, of which his innocent wife is the victim ; for, I cannot think him so vile as to take the step he has done, without a belief in her culpability ; and how could this belief have ever been formed, except by some wilful misrepresentations made to him, and some dark scheme put in practice to give a colour to the charge. My suspicions all

point to Miss Montessor; yet, what could be the inducement to conduct at once so wicked and so apparently causeless? I can discover no clue to this labyrinth of crime; but I loathe and execrate myself, for having furnished the occasion for its wearing, even for a moment, the semblance of probability, which it never could have done, but for my attentions.

Lady Annandale is ill—confined to her bed. All this I learn through the newspapers; for, I dare not, under present circumstances, send to inquire at her father's door. Consequently, I, who could not bear to think of being a single day without seeing her, and who, for the accomplishment of this selfish enjoyment, have compromised her reputation, am now debarred the privilege of even a common acquaintance—that of sending to inquire after her health; and dare not even hope ever to behold her again.

Her innocence of this foul charge must be made manifest: nothing but the most wilful perjury can be brought against her. However, whether acquitted or condemned, too well do I know her, to indulge a hope that she would ever again consent to see me, and thus give a colour to the odious suspicions my attentions have excited.

Lady Delaward has come to London, to be near her. I was sure she would; for, she is not a woman to doubt the purity of which her own feelings must be the guarantee; or to shrink from the responsibility of countenancing the innocence she does not doubt. She is worthy to be the friend of Augusta. But let me not use that name with a familiarity that I dare not adopt were she present; for, notwithstanding her youth and inexperience, never yet did a woman preserve a more dignified reserve than Lady Annandale,—a reserve that

emanated from the inherent modesty of her nature.

I wander about at night like a disturbed spirit, and find myself continually in Grosvenor Square, gazing on the house that contains this suffering angel. The whole of the side where Lord Vernon's house stands is covered with straw; the knocker is tied up; and the entire mansion has an air of gloom and desolation which chills my heart. It was in that house, which now presents so dull and cheerless an aspect, that, a few weeks ago, I saw this lovely creature, in all the bloom of health and youth. How looks she now? Bowed down by shame and sorrow; for, well do I know, that even the consciousness of her innocence will not enable her to support the false, the insulting suspicions, to which her honour is exposed; and by me! — me, who should have shielded it from even the shadow of a doubt. I have

been her bitterest, cruellest enemy ; and she must loathe me, when she reflects on the irreparable injury I have inflicted on her.

I never go out during the day, or receive any visits. I could not bear, at such a crisis, to meet the eye of curiosity, or to have my looks or manner commented upon, and cited as presumptive proofs of the truth or falsehood of the vile charge against that honour I know to be so spotless. To affect a cheerfulness utterly repugnant to my feelings, would be impossible ; and the gloomy despondency I cannot shake off, would be considered as evidence of guilt. O world ! world ! how often are your conclusions erroneous ! and how prone are you to attribute the vilest motives to actions, where guilt never was imagined !

I destroy all the newspapers that refer to this foul libel ; and writhe in agony when I reflect how many thousands of them will

circulate in the various parts of the globe, disseminating far and wide these infamous aspersions on the fame of this angel : and I — *I* am the cause of all this ! Better could I have borne that she had died while yet her reputation was as stainless as is her life, than have lived to see her name profaned, and made the subject of the ribald jests of the vile and vicious.

Bear with me, my dear Mordaunt ; and believe me

Ever yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

THE COUNTESS OF DELAWARD TO THE
EARL OF DELAWARD.

WE reached this place last evening, my beloved; and most melancholy was our arrival. When we came within view of the park, my poor dear friend begged me to assist her to rise from her recumbent position.

“How thankful ought I to be, Mary,” said she, “at being permitted to reach home ere I die. How verdant, how serene, how lovely, every thing here appears! See how the glorious sun has tinged the landscape, and now behold his last rays are shedding a golden light on the oriel window of the church—that church, dear friend, where I shall soon repose. How often have I entertained this thought of late, and longed to take up my everlasting rest there, away from all the dis-

honour and shame that have rendered life insupportable! How calm, how beautiful it looks! Never did weary traveller hail the end of his toilsome voyage with a more thankful spirit than I do the approaching termination of mine. You will think it a puerile feeling, dear Mary, yet, nevertheless, it gives me comfort that my earthly remains will repose in a spot where no harsh eye will fall on my grave, and where those only who have known and loved me since my birth will dwell on it. *They* will not believe me guilty: no, a mother's purity and a father's honour will vouch to them for the innocence of her, who so lately left her happy home, and who so soon returned to it, blighted in fame and health, to leave it no more. Yes, the returning so accompanied, supported by parents, loved and honoured by all; and cheered by the presence of the dear and faithful friend of her infancy, whose whole

life is an unsullied page of brightest virtue, — yes, this is to be blessed! Your presence proves my freedom from guilt to all here; and I thank you, Mary, with a heart overflowing with gratitude and affection, for this invaluable proof of friendship.”

The old gray-headed servants met us at the door, sorrow imprinted on every face. My poor Augusta had a faint smile for each, but she was too much exhausted to speak; and we bore her to the cheerful apartment she had always occupied in other and happier days. I cannot tell you, my beloved, how much the sight of this chamber agitated me, by recalling to memory the blooming creature, full of life and hope, whom I had so often, and so lately, beheld in it; and thus forcing me to contrast that bright vision with the pale and fragile being before me, on whose brow the characters of death are but too plainly traced. There she

lay reclined on the sofa, her long lids closed, and large drops stealing from beneath them down her still beautiful face. When she had gained some degree of composure, and found herself again alone with me, her eyes wandered all over the room, fixing, with a tender interest, on every object; and she said,—

“ It is strange, dear friend, that, on looking around me here, I could almost fancy that all that has occurred within the last few months has been a fearful dream, every thing appears so exactly as in former happy times. Ah, there is nothing changed but me ! ”

She wept on my bosom for a few minutes; but hearing the step of her mother, she endeavoured to subdue her emotions, although I observed that the watchful eye of affection had quickly discovered them.

“ Mother ! ” said Augusta, “ let me see good Dr. Wilmington early to-morrow, and

receive the sacrament from his hands. I wish that you, and my father too, should share this consolation with me; and you also, dear friend," she added, turning to me. "I feel so tranquil, so happy, now that I am in my home,"—and she embraced her mother,—“that I long to render thanks to the Almighty, who has listened to my prayers, and vouchsafed this blessing.”

She expressed a hope that her father would enable her to bequeath a provision of five thousand pounds to Miss Montessor, and pay a yearly allowance to the nurse of Lord Annandale's son, as an incentive to her to take care of the child.

“Poor Caroline Montessor!” said she; “it is so painful to be wholly dependent on her aunt” (for Augusta knows not that Mrs. Wickham is no more), “and it is dangerous to be poor, when the principles are not deeply

fixed. Let this donation, dearest mother, be notified to her, as a last proof of my regard.”

I am sure that if Augusta desired them to bestow half their fortune on any one, these adoring parents would instantly consent to her desire ; for their only source of comfort seems to exist in a compliance with her wishes. You shall hear from me again to-morrow, my beloved ; until then, adieu.

Augusta has had a tranquil night, and appears more composed. She desired that all the old servants might be permitted to be present when she received the sacrament. Her wish was obeyed ; and a more touching sight it would be impossible to imagine than that of this angelic creature, reduced almost to a breathing shadow, reclined on the sofa, with her father, mother, and myself, bending over

her, and all the gray-headed domestics kneeling around.

“ Before I receive the sacred elements you are about to administer to me, Dr. Wilmington,” said she, “ I wish, in the presence of all these mortal witnesses, and in the presence of that merciful God, to whom the secrets of all hearts are known, to declare, with the lips of a dying woman, my perfect innocence of the crime of which I am accused; and my deep and heartfelt contrition for having, by a want of prudence and decorum, lent a semblance of probability to the charge. I avow the error of my conduct, in having too much disregarded worldly opinion; and ask pardon of Almighty God, for having furnished cause for scandal, and led those who have condemned me to form erroneous conclusions.”

There was not a dry eye in the room; even that of the venerable pastor was dimmed with

tears, as he witnessed this act of humility in one whose besetting sin he knew to be pride.

“ I wish, also,” resumed Augusta, “ to express my contrition at not having taken the pains that every wife should take to conciliate her husband, as I, too late! feel that had I so done, mine never would have condemned me unheard.”

He administered the sacrament to her, of which we also partook ; but not until he had given us one of the most impressive and touching discourses that ever fell from human lips.

Augusta is now asleep ; a blessed calm seems spread over, and a faint smile plays on her pale lip ; the rays of the setting sun have penetrated through the muslin curtains, casting a bright shade of rose over every object around, and tinging her face with a radiance that renders it of almost unearthly beauty. No,

never, in the brightest days of health, did I behold her so lovely as at this moment! She moves — I must leave you.

Alas! my dear, dear friend is no more! She passed away from this life without a struggle or sigh; and is now, I humbly trust, an angel in heaven. Though prepared to lose her, I thought not that she was so soon to leave us; and I feel the blow more poignantly, because I thought it more distant. I left off writing to you on seeing her move; and, on approaching her, discovered that she had ceased to breathe. Her poor father entered a moment after, and found that I had fainted. Do not be alarmed about me, dearest, I am better now; and having to assist good Dr. Wilmington in endeavouring to console the heart-stricken parents of my lost friend, I feel the exertion most beneficial to me.

Never was there any thing more touching than the appearance of Augusta in the sleep of death. An expression of beatitude is impressed on her calm and marble-like face, that renders it almost divine ; and a stranger would suppose that she could not have numbered above twelve or thirteen years. When I behold her with that heavenly countenance, my grief becomes less acute ; for there is something inexpressibly soothing in dwelling on that angelic face. Poor dear Lord and Lady Vernon find the same consolation, and have sent express for two of the best artists from London, to make a picture, and a cast, from which a bust is to be executed of her. How I wish you, my beloved, were here to see her ! for never before did death assume so lovely, so blessed an aspect. Who, that could behold that tranquil brow and angelic repose, could imagine the anguish that has preyed upon her pure heart

during the last few weeks ? But she has escaped from it now, and is in that blessed kingdom where “ the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest ; ” where we, I humbly trust, may one day be united to her.

Ever your own

MARY.

FROM THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM
TO EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

MORDAUNT, I have destroyed her !—she is no more ! and I,—I who fancied I knew her,—could indulge the vain hope, even until the last, that she would have borne up against the stain attempted to be cast on her honour. It was my mad passion that drew shame and degradation on her name ; it was *I* who consigned this pure and lovely being to an un-

timely grave, leaving her parents childless, to mourn their misplaced confidence in one so wholly unworthy as I have proved myself to be. Of *her* innocence they never could have a doubt—as who could that really knew her?—but of my weak and wicked conduct, in paying her those continual and marked attentions, to which no married woman can be subjected without a loss of reputation, they can form but one opinion; and that one, my own conscience tells me, I have but too well merited.

I am leaving England — perhaps for ever. My mind is so tortured that I can arrange no plans. Oh! why had I not courage to fly from her when I first discovered the state of my heart?— But, no; selfish and cruel as even the most obdurate could be, thoughtless of aught save my own gratification, I continued to hover round her until my passion be-

came too evident, and thus lent a colour to the false charges against her. Never, never can I forgive myself! *I*, who could not bear to absent myself from her presence for a few hours, must now learn to bear the soul-harrowing conviction, that I shall see her no more; that she, the loveliest, the purest of her sex, is in the early grave to which my unworthy passion has conducted her. I embark for Spain to-morrow. I can write no more.

Your unhappy friend,

NOTTINGHAM.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

I AM a wretch indeed, Delphine, and the measure of my crimes is full. Augusta — the lovely, the pure, the wronged Augusta, is no more ; and has found in death a refuge from the shame my vile plots brought on her name. Fool, fool that I was, not to have foreseen, that a being of a nature like hers never could have supported a suspicion of dishonour.

I have destroyed her ! *I*, whom she loved and trusted, and who should have shielded her from the breath of evil, was the serpent who deliberately coiled around her heart to sting it mortally. There is a weight of guilt on my soul that oppresses it beyond endurance. I loathe my own existence ; and am filled with self-abhorrence, by reflections that pursue

me, night and day, with unremitting bitterness, — eternally suggesting the recollection of this lovely creature, as she was when I first used my evil influence over her innocent mind, which not all my arts could corrupt, and who, by my fiend-like machinations, I have sent, in a few short months, to an early grave, as a refuge from the shame I had brought on her.

This fatal intelligence was communicated to me by Lord Annandale. Even he, senseless as he is, is shocked; for he believed not that she was seriously ill. If he knew who it was that destroyed her! And he offers me consolation, too; dwells on my indulgence towards her errors, and the kind excuses I made for her when he had discovered her guilt! Oh, this unmerited praise, how it pierces my heart! — that heart which could, with unexampled and malicious cruelty, steel itself against the pleadings of humanity, and

persevere in destroying so pure, so guileless a creature.

Lord Annandale says, that he has given orders to stop all legal proceedings, now that death has released him from a marriage he wished to dissolve; and that, as soon as a decent time shall have elapsed, he will call on me for the fulfilment of my promise of becoming his. Little does this weak man dream of the difference between the innocent being he has repudiated, and the guilty one he would take to his arms. Little thinks he, that the one on whose brow he would place the coronet of his ancestral line, is the crouching, trembling slave of a low ruffian; a wretch, whose hands are steeped in blood, and whose lips may, at any hour, stamp disgrace and infamy on the future Countess of Annandale.

Let me come to you, Delphine, and rest

beneath your roof until I become a wife, and entitled to some legal protection. Here, I have no friend — nay, no one to whom I could give the term, even in its broad sense, except the Comtesse Hohenlinden; and her house, the scene of continual gaiety and dissipation, would be no fit abode for me under my present circumstances. Let me have a line, to say I may come, and I will instantly leave England, where every object reminds me of all that I wish to forget — my crimes, and their punishment. Once the wife of Annandale, I will become a different creature; my new duties shall be scrupulously performed, my past sins deeply repented, and atoned.

There may be still pardon for guilt even dark as mine; and if that wretch, whose power hangs threatening over me, like the sword of Damocles suspended but by a thread,

molests me not, I may again know peace on earth.

A letter has this moment arrived, apprising me that Augusta has secured me five thousand pounds, as a last token of regard. To *me*, who betrayed — who destroyed her! This is one of the rewards of my crime; it is the price of the blood of my victim! And she could think of me,—dear, suffering angel! and that kindly, too, even when the hand of death was on her; while I was anticipating the succession to her position, and, for the attainment of this evil object, not hesitating to sacrifice her fame, and, consequently, her life.

This last act of hers has flooded my heart with tenderness, which runs over at my eyes; and I feel relieved by the tears that seem inexhaustible. Would that I could shed them

upon your bosom, Delphine! and that you could speak comfort to the tortured heart of your

CAROLINE.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

THE papers have announced to me, *chère* Delphine, that the unfortunate man arrested for the murder of my poor aunt has been tried, found guilty, and condemned to death. Oh, gracious God! how bitter are my feelings at the reflection that *I* knew his innocence — that a word of mine might have saved him, and that I dared not utter it! How dreadful, how appalling, to know that the existence of

a fellow-creature depends on me, and be denied the power of saving him! Here is another crime added to the fearful catalogue of mine—another life, which I have been the means of sacrificing! Where, where will the fatal consequences of my guilt end? I cannot banish the terrible thought from my mind, that the blood of this innocent man rests on my head. In what a labyrinth of guilt do I find myself entangled — one crime following fast on the steps of the other! I wonder I do not lose my senses, and almost wish I did; for madness, if it produced obliviousness of this last year, would be preferable—oh, how infinitely preferable!—to reason.

Imagination pictures this unfortunate man, led forth to the scene of his death; his white locks waving in the breeze; his tottering limbs bending beneath the weight of his languid frame; and his eyes turned towards that

heaven, where, alone, he believes his innocence to be known. I see his wretched wife and children, bowed down by despair and anguish, surrounded by an unpitying crowd, who, believing him culpable, sympathise not with the grief of his family. I see him launched into eternity, to meet from his God that mercy denied him on earth; while *I— I*, who know his innocence, and might have saved him, have allowed him to be sacrificed! In utter hopelessness, I have thrown myself upon my knees before that Power whose might I feel, but whose clemency I hardly dare to supplicate — for I am steeped in guilt, that almost defies hope. What atonement can be made to the widow and orphans? what can efface the indelible shame inflicted on their guiltless lives, by the crime affixed to that of their equally guiltless father? I tremble in dismay before the terrors of an avenging God, whose

mercies I have slighted in the hours of prosperity, but whose wrath I dare not anticipate.

I loathe life, poisoned as it is by the consciousness of crimes that render it nearly insupportable; yet I turn with fear and trembling from death—that passage to an eternity of punishment, which conscience tells me I have but too deeply merited. My dreams are haunted by the sweet face of the angelic Augusta—her whom I so ruthlessly condemned to an untimely grave; the stern and reproachful countenance of my murdered aunt looks menacingly at me; and the assassin's wild and demoniacal laugh rings in my ear, as he threatens me with exposure and infamy. Oh, God! oh, God! how long can nature sustain this torture?

Pity me, Delphine — though I am unworthy of pity, for my life has been one continued career of selfishness and turpitude;

and it is only lately that I have awaked to a sense of the faults that have plunged me in guilt, from the depths of which no ray of hope is visible. It is solely by the aid of opiates that I have been able to procure sleep for some months. How my health has not sunk under the weight of remorse and regret that oppresses me, seems miraculous : but it is only the good and beloved who are snatched away ; the bad and unloved are left on earth as a punishment and an example.

My maid has just told me that the young man who was to have married the daughter of my poor aunt's faithful steward, renounced her on hearing the charge against her father ; and, as she was deeply attached to him, his desertion has preyed so heavily upon her, that, even before the condemnation of her father, her health had become so impaired as to leave little hope of her recovery. This, also, is one

of the results of my not having declared his innocence! But when will the results of my crimes terminate?

Adieu! adieu!

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
MISS MONTRESSOR.

MA CHÈRE CAROLINE,—How much pain does it give me to be compelled to tell you that I cannot receive you again beneath my roof! Do you think I could have been so unkind towards the friend of my youth as not to have proposed her coming to me immediately on the death of her aunt, had not a cruel and insurmountable obstacle opposed it? You know, *chère amie*, when you left France, that the expenses of our vast establishment had greatly

embarrassed our finances ; but, alas ! you did not know that the passion for gaming, so fatally indulged in by my husband, had totally ruined us. *Maman*, after having repeatedly assisted to retard the ruin that threatened, at length became wearied by such frequent demands on her liberality ; and, influenced by le Père Maubois, who, I formerly told you, had acquired a perfect dominion over her, has retired to Italy, attended by him, and has there fixed her abode, refusing to lend us any further aid.

Reduced to positive want—having no longer the means of supporting our establishment, or paying our creditors, la Duchesse de Chateauneuf, the aunt of my husband, has received us beneath her roof, after having made a thousand humiliating stipulations ; the most bitter of all, that of never permitting you to enter her house. You may remember, *chère amie*, how

much she disliked you ever since she detected you mimicking her one day before a brilliant circle. How well I remember it, and how every body laughed ! Next to *maman*, you were the person she most detested ; and, therefore, you will at once perceive that, depending on her wholly, as we do, it is impossible for us to comply with your wishes. You can form no idea of the *triste* life we lead in her antiquated mansion, Rue de Grenelle, in the Faubourg St. Germain. Would you believe it ? she prohibits my receiving le Duc de Chatillion, or la Comtesse de Hauteforte, to whom, as you know, my husband has been so long attached. She will not allow us to have *écarté* of an evening, but insists on either of us playing *piquet* with her for half *francs*. No box at the opera — no visits to the theatres ; in short, no any thing that is agreeable or rational. Then, she has the very worst cook in France ;

consequently, we have no choice between being starved or poisoned, so execrable is her *cuisine*. I am confident you would pity us, were you to witness the privations we endure.

I am sure *notre tante* only patronises us to vex *maman*, who has thrown us off; but, as she is rich and old, we must please her, and my husband will be her heir: I only hope she will not long keep him an expectant one. *Comme c'est drole*, that Miladi Annandale should die because she was suspected! How strange and exaggerated your compatriots are in their notions! *Je ne comprend rien de tout cela*. I only comprehend that, if every lady in Paris who is suspected chose, therefore, to die, we should have very few left in society.

Do you know, *ma chère amie*, that you become *tout à fait originale dans vos idées*, and that you really require to leave your land of fogs, and mix with reasonable people here,

to dispel the *ennui*, or devils blue, as the English say, that have taken possession of your brain. You think yourself very wicked, guilty of *des grands crimes*, and you write as the heroines of tragedy speak: but I think you only an *unlucky*, and not a wicked person; and so thinks *mon mari*, to whom I have shewed your letters. It is the motive, and not the results, that constitutes the crime.

Your first error turned out unfortunately — that was simply an indiscretion; and, had not *ce mauvais sujet* that caught your youthful fancy been ruined, and left *sans sous*, he would not have again appeared to cast a shadow on the horizon of your prospects — this I call unlucky. When you opened the window, and he entered, you had no evil motive towards your aunt, *malgré* she was *un peu revêche*, and not *un peu ennuyeuse*. His poverty tempted him to take her money

and jewels; and his safety, probably, urged him to the rest. All this was very unlucky; but *his* poverty was, as I think I have satisfactorily proved, the cause of all *cette affaire tragique*; and you have, consequently, nothing of which to accuse yourself that I can see, except not having chosen a lover neither likely to ruin himself, nor to be ruined—nor capable, even in a case of necessity, of strangling old ladies.

With regard to Miladi Annandale, you have been, also, unlucky. It is true, the *triste* position in which you found yourself *chez madame votre tante*, compelled you to urge your young friend to a marriage for which she had lost all taste: but, had she been a reasonable woman, she might have, notwithstanding, been very happy; for, with a good fortune, a brilliant position, and a weak, indulgent husband, what more could she desire?

It is not your fault that all these *agrémens* sufficed not to satisfy her—the fault rests with herself. She falls in love with that imbecile *milord*, whose stupid name I forget; you wish to enable her to marry him, and take yourself the man she dislikes: what could be more rational or agreeable? She mars this judicious and feasible scheme solely by her unaccountable scruples and false notions; then, perversely, will not be consoled; and consequently — dies: while you, absurdly, blame yourself; as if you, or any other reasonable person, could have possibly foreseen such a termination to the comedy you had prepared, but which her *entêtement* alone has converted into a tragedy.

You are unhappy, too, because she has left you an independence. Of all the incomprehensible occurrences which you have related to me, your contrition on this account

puzzles my brain the most ; for it appears to me that such a circumstance should only be a cause of rejoicing. You say that she was an angel ; and, as I have formed no very definite notions of the angelic state, I am perfectly willing to believe your assertion — especially as she was, certainly, utterly unlike all the women I ever either saw or heard described. Supposing, then, your classification to be accurate, the earth, undoubtedly, was no fit place for her ; and you should, therefore, exult that she has repaired to a more congenial sphere, leaving you the possession of her terrestrial honours.

This, *chère* Caroline, is my philosophy. I owe it to you ; for you must remember, when you first enlightened me, I was the slave of certain old-fashioned prejudices, which you persuaded me to discard. Ever since this period, I have endeavoured to make life as

agreeable as possible, leaving the rest to chance, which you have taught me to believe produces all things for the best. I have always thought, and your letters have more fully convinced me, that poverty is the cause of every evil. I mean, therefore, to eschew this most tempting of all the demons to the utmost of my power ; and as the bequests of your aunt, and *la romanesque miladi*, have secured you a comfortable independence, you are safe, even should you not marry *ce faible milord*. Why abandon the philosophy you used to be so proud of, and in which you took such pains to make me a proficient ? If you find England so dull, why not come to Paris, and establish yourself with some one of the many *dames de haut rang, ruinées*, who would be but too happy to enact the rôle of *chaperon* until you marry ?

Adieu, chère amie ! Mon mari m'a chargé

de vous dire mille choses aimables de sa part.

Write to me often, and believe me always

Votre amie dévouée

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

MISS MONTRESSOR TO LA MARQUISE
DE VILLEROI.

It is now a year since I have written to you, *chère* Delphine: your last letter gave me so much pain by its philosophy,—that pernicious philosophy, which I shall ever accuse myself for having instilled into you,—that I had not spirits to write to you of aught but my regrets, and in these you have convinced me you take no interest, have no sympathy.

Oh, Delphine! that philosophy failed me

the moment when, wounded and despairing, I tried to lean on it for consolation. It stood revealed to me shorn of all its sophistry, and hideous in its deformity; to remorse it could give no answer, to grief no balm. It seemed like some chimera dire; the creation of an excited brain, that mocked my anguish, and added to my despair. When I discovered its fallacy, Delphine, I shuddered at recollecting that you, also, were its dupe, that *I* had made you so, and I prayed for power to exorcise this foul spirit from the breast into which I had introduced it. I pray so still, and entreat you to believe that nothing but unhappiness can await those who trust in it, as I know by bitter, bitter experience.

Every line in your letter was as a dagger that pierced my soul, and the wounds bled not the less that I had furnished the weapon.

In a week I am to become the wife of Lord

Annandale, to take the place of that angel whom I destroyed. I shall fear to see her in all the rooms which she once occupied; and my heart melts in tenderness before the visions my fancy creates, as I behold her approving the change in my sentiments—a change that she would have hailed with such satisfaction.

I have been living in solitude during the last year, in a cottage near Richmond. I have read much, and thought more—I hope not without profit. I have renounced all faith in the pernicious doctrines that so long perverted my mind, and have laid down a system of conduct for my future life, which, if it redeem not my past crimes, will, at least, be a security against the committal of any future ones.

Adieu, chère Delphine ! Votre amie,

CAROLINE.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI
TO MISS MONTRESSOR.

It gave me great pleasure, *ma chère* Caroline, to see your hand-writing again, after so long and unaccountable a silence. *Vraiment c'étoit bien méchante de votre part*, to leave me so long in ignorance of your destiny. You deserve a severe lecture ; but, as I have nearly as great a dislike to giving as receiving such proofs of interest, I shall spare you, hoping this generosity on my side will be rewarded by a more regular correspondence on yours.

And so you are on the eve of being transformed into *Madame la Comtesse d'Annandale*. I wish you joy with all my heart ; and, I trust, that your new position will bestow on you all the happiness that wealth, station, and the

various *agrémens* you possess ought to secure. That they may do so, let me counsel you to abandon the romantic and exaggerated notions you have lately acquired — notions peculiar to your countrywomen; and which tend to render them dissatisfied with the actual and positive good within their reach, because it falls short of some fancied one of which they have dreamt, or read in romances.

You have been of late disposed to view all *en noir*. This is neither wise nor philosophical, and, because I bantered you on this sombre tendency, you cease to write to me. You have suffered an excited imagination to represent le Chevalier de Carency as the fearful hero of a melo-drame, instead of a *mauvais sujet*, which he is; and you then become terrified at the phantom which you have yourself created. Had you assailed him with ridicule, of which all men, and especially vain ones, are so sus-

ceptible, *he* would have been more tractable, and you, *chère* Caroline, would have suffered less annoyance.

Mais à present, tout cela est fini, and the brilliancy of your new position will console you for the troubles of the past. Would that I could tell you that mine was ameliorated since I last wrote to you. *Hélas!* it is any thing but agreeable; but, as dwelling on the subject will not render it less painful, I will spare you and myself the useless *chagrin* of recapitulating my grievances.

Apropos of grievances, *mon pauvre* Florestan, is still tormented by his abominable creditors, who menace him with an arrest. *Mais le cher homme s'amuse toujours, malgré tout cela.* He is really a philosopher, and reduces to practice what others only adopt in theory. His embarrassments are a great source of discomfort to me; for, independently of

their frequently depriving me of the pleasure of his society, by compelling his absence, in order to avoid his creditors, it furnishes his tiresome aunt with an excuse for prohibiting me from entering into general society : as if my staying at home, which *ennuies* me to death, could pay poor Florestan's debts. *Mais que voulez-vous ?* Old people, and, above all, old aunts, are invariably stupid, and prone to torment, and never are at all amusing, except on the stage, when their peculiarities are *mis en evidence*.

The lectures of *madame la duchesse, ma tante*, are interminable ; and, now that Florestan is not, as hitherto, present to share them, they fall still more heavily on me. The house resembles nothing but a convent, which, of the two, would be less disagreeable, for the abbess would not have the knowledge of my past indiscretions to convert into a theme for homilies and reproaches, which form the constant

subject of *ma tante's* conversation. *Mais je vous demande pardon, ma chère, pour vous avoir ennuyé avec cette triste tirade*: I really had determined on not entering on my domestic chagrins, but some few have escaped from my pen ; be grateful that I have stopped so soon.

I wish you would induce *milord* to come to Paris, that I might again embrace you ; and assure you, *vivá voce*, how truly I am

Ma chère Caroline's

Amie dévouée,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

You know not how much it pains me, *ma chère* Delphine, to discover, by your last letter, that Florestan is menaced with St. Pelagie, and you scarcely less than a prisoner in the sombre resi-

dence of his aunt. I entreat your acceptance of the enclosed sum : any banker at Paris will give you gold for the bank-note ; and do not imagine that, by its acceptance, you put me to the least inconvenience ; I am only too happy to be of use to one for whom I entertain so sincere a regard.

It is a great relief to my feelings that we have come to spend the first month of our wedded life at Annandale Castle—a fine seat of my husband's, where Augusta has never been. Here is no portrait, no memorial of her, to remind me that she ever existed ; nothing, save the never-dying, still, small voice of conscience, which incessantly reproaches me.

Lord Annandale is all kindness—all affection ; and every thing around me is marked by a splendour and taste that might satisfy the most ambitious and fastidious of my sex. Now, therefore, for the first time, I am mis-

ness of the rank and wealth for which I have so long sighed; and for the attainment of which I have committed such fearful crimes. Yet, do I enjoy the coveted baubles, now that they are mine? Alas, no! the thought of how they have been obtained destroys all; and gladly—oh, how gladly! would I exchange them for obscurity, could I obtain peace of mind.

The husband who cherishes and smiles on me would turn away in horror, knew he my crimes, or that he was the dupe to my arts; and the very attendants, who approach me with such reverential deference, would shrink back if they only dreamt of the turpitude of the new-made bride. I am forced to exert every energy to conceal the depression of my spirits—a depression attributed by Lord Annandale to a nervous illness, brought on by the awful death of my aunt, and in-

creased by that of Augusta. *He* often compliments me on my sensibility (think what I must feel at such unmerited commendations!) and redoubles his attentions, in order to subdue my sadness.

He is, naturally, a kind-hearted and good-natured man, with gentle and agreeable manners; his only failing, and it is a venial one too, is his excessive vanity, which has led him into situations in which his morals have been injured, and his sensibility blunted. He is so grateful for the high opinion of his mental and personal qualifications which he believes me to entertain, that his complaisance and indulgence for me are unbounded, and his generosity equally so.

Yesterday he presented me with the family diamonds, which are magnificent. How many thoughts did the sight of them recall! Well do I remember, when, the day previous to

Augusta's wedding, I was dwelling, with longing and envious eyes on their dazzling lustre, how she turned away, regardless of them; and only answered me with tears, when I expressed my astonishment that she could be so insensible to the pleasure of possessing them.

They are now mine; but do they give *me* pleasure? Alas! no; for they remind me, that, to obtain them, I have lost a jewel beyond all price — the peace that a conscience free from guilt bestows.

When I look round on the stately saloons, splendid pictures, and magnificent furniture, of this fine castle, I almost wonder that, being its mistress, I can be otherwise than happy; yet, too late I find, that the splendour purchased by wicked schemes, and successful artifices, can never give happiness. I forget the *end* in the *means* used to attain it; and turn with disappointment from possessions

which cannot banish the sense of remorse from my mind.

Yet, I am not ungrateful to Lord Annandale—far from it. Nay, more; a warmer feeling of gratitude than I ever thought I should experience towards him fills my heart. It is a mingled sentiment of pity for his being the dupe of the plot I have practised upon him, and thankfulness for the affection with which he treats me. I wish to repay him, by every exertion in my power for his welfare and happiness; and think, that if there be still a chance of peace for me on earth, it rests on the fulfilment of the duties my new position demands. When he tenderly reproaches me for my altered character and unusual gravity, I feel the colour rise to my cheeks, and vainly endeavour to assume the semblance of gaiety; but I cannot long sustain the effort, and my spirits soon droop again.

He expresses alarm for my health, and proposes change of climate ; but what change of climate or scene can ever banish from my memory the fatal recollections that poison my existence, and dash the cup of peace from my thirsty and fevered lips ?

Adieu, *chère* Delphine ! *votre amie,*

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO THE
MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

DELPHINE, Delphine, I am lost ! The assassin is here—he has found me ! and well do I know that neither the arm of love, nor the protection of our princely household, can shield me from this fiend in human shape.

I was regaining some portion of my lost peace — the present was less bitter, the future less frowning ; and I began to hope

that, by a deep contrition for the past, and a strict fulfilment of my new duties, I might ultimately obtain pardon from the Almighty. But it was not to be ; for *me* there is no peace either here or hereafter : and terror, vague yet irresistible, palsies my nerves !

I left my chamber this morning with spirits less depressed than usual. The day was beautiful, and all nature seemed rejoicing. When I looked on the vast woods around this princely domain, and the countless herds of deer, grazing on the green lawns that intersperse them, the repose and grandeur of the scene delighted me ; and I remembered, with pleasure, that this noble spot called me mistress. Its lord joined me on the terrace, and, marking the pleasure with which I gazed on the view, he drew me more affectionately to his side, and whispered kind, fond words, expressive of his increased partiality to Annandale Castle,

now that it had pleased me, and become a witness of his happiness.

How soothing is affection! and how do those who, like me, have known little of this sweetener of life, turn, with awakened tenderness, to him who administers the cordial! But why do I dwell on this now? Alas! I cling to the memory of this bright morning, and the hopes I then dared to indulge, as the last remnant of domestic peace; for the destroyer is at hand, and for his victim there is no escape.

Soon after breakfast, my husband proposed driving me in a pony phaeton; and we entered it, in cheerful spirits. Having proceeded through the beautiful grounds, he wished to shew me a picturesque point of view at the other side of a neighbouring village; in passing through which we suddenly came on *him* whose sight nearly deprived me of reason.

Hearing the wheels of a carriage, he turned round quickly, and, as I caught his glance, I uttered a piercing shriek, and fell back, nearly fainting. Lord Annandale instantly stopped, and, in the kindest way, inquired the cause of my alarm; which, when I had recovered, I attributed to the sight of a child running across the road, and my fears that it would be trampled by the horses.

I proposed returning to the castle, feeling too much agitated and unwell to continue our drive; and, even now that some hours have elapsed since I beheld that monster, I feel overpowered with terror: I dread being alone, and tremble each time that a servant enters, lest he should come to announce the presence of my enemy, or be the bearer of a letter from him.

Brief as was the glance I had of him, I saw that his apparel denoted the same state

of poverty as when I last had the misfortune to behold him: consequently, it is evident that the large sum, and the price of the jewels plundered from my murdered aunt, must have all disappeared, and he is come here to extort fresh supplies.

What will become of me? Oh, Delphine! my heart faints within me, and my brain is nearly maddened. Death, in its most fearful shape, would be preferable to dragging on an existence, every moment of which may be embittered by the presence or menaces of that atrocious man; who, after all my sacrifices, may denounce me when I can no longer administer to his wants.

Sometimes, in a fit of desperation, I have thought of avowing all to Lord Annandale; but a moment's reflection on the peculiarities of his character has led me to abandon the project. When I look around me, and

behold the splendour and elegances of this abode, and the vast train of retainers that await my will; yet think that, in the midst of state and power, *I*, the mistress of this proud and princely dwelling, must tremble before a wretch—an outcast, with whom the poorest of my dependents would scorn to hold intercourse—must feel that I am an accomplice in his guilt; and *that* guilt—the murder and robbery of one who stood to me in the position of a parent, who was my sole relative and protector,—can you wonder that my brain is nearly maddened, and that I pray for death, unfit as I am to meet it?

He has written to me. On entering my *chambre de toilette* to dress for dinner, my attendant presented me with his letter.

“The person who gave it to me, *madame la comtesse*,” said Claudine, “was a foreigner—a terrible-looking man; so much so, that all

the servants bantered me on the bad countenance and shabbiness of appearance of my visitor; for so he represented himself to be, though I assured them that I did not know him. One of his eyes is concealed by a black patch, and his huge whiskers and moustaches nearly cover his face. I certainly have seen him before; — yes, now I recollect having seen that wicked face somewhere. Oh, yes—it was, sure enough, at the village of Ellersly, the very day preceding the shocking death of your poor aunt; for I remember, when I heard of the murder, I immediately said to her maid, good Mrs. Western, that I had seen the most suspicious-looking man imaginable, the day before, in the village. But she answered, that *he* could have nothing to do with the murder, all the windows and doors having been found fastened on the inside; ‘therefore,’ continued Mrs. Western, ‘you see, Claudine, the dreadful crime must have

been committed by some one in the house, otherwise either a door or a window must have been found open.' ”

Think, Delphine, what were my feelings during this harangue.

“ Well, *madame la comtesse*,” resumed Claudine, “ this is the very same man ; there cannot be two such in the world, I'm sure. So he sends in for me, saying he was a friend of my lady's maid, and wished to speak to her. “ Give this letter to your mistress,” cried he, “ when she is alone ;” and he looked so fierce and proud withal, my lady, that somehow he frightened me. I took courage, however, to tell him that I never delivered letters to *madame la comtesse*.

“ I command you to be the bearer of this !” replied he, “ and your lady, when she has read it, will acquaint you, you have done well ;” and off he walked, while the servants,

who came crowding round to stare at him, slunk back, alarmed by the sternness and ferocity of his glances. To be sure, when he was gone, they were all bold enough; for they fell to abusing his looks and manner, and accusing me for having such an acquaintance, saying he looked like a thief, or something worse."

Having dismissed Claudine, whose loquacity, once set in motion, it is difficult to arrest, I locked the door, and, with trembling hands, opened the letter. The sarcastic insolence of its comments on my marriage, and the menaces of exposing me to my husband, unless I shall comply with his conditions, I leave you to imagine; they are dictated in the most malignant spirit, and expressed in the most insulting language. He added, that he learned by the papers the murder of my aunt, and *hoped* that *I* had nothing to accuse myself of

in that mysterious affair—though the circumstance of all the doors and windows having been found secured on the inside looked somewhat suspicious.

Delphine, this man is a fiend! and such is the extraordinary malignity of his nature, that I sometimes almost entertain that superstitious dread of him which is described, in some of the German works, as being inspired by evil spirits who have assumed the human shape. He writes that, now I have become a great and rich lady, he gives me notice that I am to consider myself as the agent who is to supply his exigences, and with no niggard hand; that he will permit me to continue unexposed in my present dignity so long as I find means to administer to his wants; but that, if I do not furnish him with a sufficient liberality to enable him to live in a manner befitting his birth, he will denounce and hurl me from my

station, even though he himself perish in the deed.

Imagine my feelings as I perused this letter, which I instantly destroyed, lest it should ever be seen by mortal eye : but its characters are fixed in my memory, never to be effaced ; and I am conscious that I am entangled for life in the meshes of that web of crime which this monster has woven round me too cunningly even to admit of hope of escape.

He says he will call on my maid to-morrow, for an answer. I have placed a large sum — all the money I had with me — in a small parcel, and intrusted it to Claudine to give him. She looked surprised — impertinently so, I thought, as I delivered it to her ; and I felt abashed and rebuked by the glance of my own servant. Oh, Delphine, to what humiliation am I reduced ! and where will all this misery end ? I shudder at the prospect !

Lord Annandale, when we met in the library before dinner, informed me that, on returning from his ride, one of the gate-keepers had told him that a very extraordinary and suspicious man had entered and gone to the castle, who, when questioned, replied, that he was a friend of the *femme de chambre* of *la comtesse*. "Claudine must not permit strange followers, my love," continued Lord Annandale; "and it argues ill in her favour that she should have such an acquaintance as the man described; for old Winstanley, the gate-keeper, says, that if ever villain was written in a human countenance in legible characters, it surely is in his."

I felt the blood rush to my face, and trembled lest he should observe my emotion, while saying that I should prohibit Claudine from receiving such visitors. Should Annandale see the wretch when he comes to-morrow for

the answer! But why anticipate fresh evils, when already I am bewildered by the extent of my present ones?

The kindness and affection of Lord Anandale, so far exceeding my merits, overpower me; because I but too well know how quickly they would be withdrawn, were he to be acquainted with what this miscreant could relate: yes, he would loathe, he would spurn me. I have now reached the goal to which my ambition has so long pointed — a brilliant and noble establishment. To attain this object, I have stooped to deception, to treachery, which have been productive of results that would have arrested my schemes in their very commencement, could I but have anticipated them; for, unworthy as I am, never could I have persevered in my machinations, had I dreamt that they would have conducted the wronged, the innocent Augusta to her grave.

But *she* sleeps well, and is at peace ; while *I* am tortured by the unceasing dread of detection, and the stings of a conscience that knows no rest. This recollection never leaves my brain, where it is stamped in characters of fire ; nor can I forbear repeating it again and again to you, who are the sole being to whom I can unburthen my oppressed mind.

My nerves are so shattered that I am in a state of continued agitation ; my health fails, and the tender interest its decay excites in my husband melts my hitherto stubborn heart. I find myself constantly contrasting his negligence to one, who was so infinitely, so immeasurably my superior in all respects, with his unvarying kindness to me ; and this reflection inflicts a new pang, by reminding me that, had he been left free from my vile plots, he might — nay, he must have become sen-

sible of the value of the rich treasure he possessed.

Now that I know him better, I am convinced that, were he aware of the injustice of the charges against the honour of Augusta, he never would forgive his own credulity, nor cease to execrate the wretch who practised on it. I often turn from his glance of affection, as a criminal does from the eye of his accuser. Oh, Delphine, this state is insupportable ! yet it was to attain it that I became the guilty creature I am.

I dare not venture out while this wretch remains in the neighbourhood ; the sight of him would, I do believe, destroy me. I can write no more, for my head throbs with pain ; to-morrow I will resume.

I hardly dared ask Claudine to-day if she had delivered the parcel ; she said she had,

and “hoped *madame la comtesse* would prohibit that strange and fearful man from coming again, as some of the men-servants had made such disagreeable observations on his visits.”

While she was yet speaking, Lord Annandale tapped at the door, and entered, looking discomposed and offended.

“I must ask you, my dear Lady Annandale,” said he, “to insist on your *femme de chambre’s* paying more attention to your commands in future; for again has her very suspicious-looking and disreputable acquaintance been seen here, and withdrawing, as I am informed, from another interview with her.”

I saw that Claudine, though not comprehending more than a few words (my husband having spoken in English), was about to disclaim the acquaintance, and avow the truth; so, though I trembled with emotion, I made

a desperate effort to control myself, and desired Claudine to leave the room. She obeyed my mandate, but reluctantly, and in tears, and evidently most impatient to justify herself to my lord. As soon as she had withdrawn, I told him — though how my inventive powers could act at such a moment I now wonder — that the man in question was a near relative of Claudine's; that he had been unfortunate, and came to see her for the last time previous to leaving England; that she, poor thing, had felt acutely his distress, but had promised me to receive him no more.

Lord Annandale was immediately pacified, pitied poor Claudine, and offered some money to assist to pay her cousin's journey to Italy. Nay, he wished to speak to her himself, feeling sorry at having spoken harshly on the subject; but I dissuaded him from this proceeding.

So here am I again, Delphine, entered into

the crooked path of untruth ; and compromised, to a certain extent, before Claudine, who will naturally see that there is some mystery attached to this man's visits which I dare not avow, and the odium of which is cast upon her. All this weighs me down, but I feel there is no escape ; a temporary respite I may purchase, but Heaven only knows how short that respite may be, or how soon the recklessness of this monster may provoke some fearful *esclandre*.

I have had a most painful and humiliating scene with Claudine. She wept passionately, complained of being disgraced in the eyes of my lord, her reputation blemished in the opinion of the servants, and of being treated with insolence by that “ *terrible mauvais sujet*,” as she justly pronounced my evil genius to be.

I had much difficulty in pacifying her; was compelled to humble myself to accomplish it; and the gift of my gold Briguet repeater scarcely seemed to console her for the accusation of being a friend of him in whose hands my fortune, fame, and life, are placed. This it is, Delphine, to have committed one crime! To what endless subterfuges and humiliations does it not lead! but all this infamy and peril I must bear; and never henceforth can I assert the due authority of a mistress over a servant in whose custody is the fatal secret, the slightest reference to which could, at any moment, blanch the cheek, and baffle the self-possession, of her guilty and degraded mistress.

Adieu, chère amie! votre

CAROLINE.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

MILLE remerciemens, ma chère Caroline, for your generous and timely assistance. You must permit me to consider it as a loan, which I trust I may be able, ere long, to repay; though I must ever remain your debtor for the friendship that prompted the kindness.

I am *au désespoir* at finding that you are still pursued by that *monstre*, De Carency: but have you not a law in England, which I think I have heard of, called an alien-bill, or some such term, by which you could get this wretch sent out of the country? *Ah! que je regrette le bon vieux temps*, when a *lettre de cachet* could have been obtained!

Mais, en vérité, ma bonne amie, you take things too much to heart. You are too

nervous, too easily alarmed ; and this timidity gives De Carency a power over you, that he will not fail to use to his profit, and to your continual annoyance —if not, ultimately, to your destruction. Prohibit your servants from letting any suspicious-looking person enter your doors ; and, if he writes to you, commit the letters to the flames. Pursue this conduct but for a short time, and he will soon cease to torment you. He can gain nothing by exposing you to Lord Annandale, and would risk being arrested ; for, in such a desperate dilemma, you, of course, could not hesitate to give him up to justice, as the assassin of your aunt.

You could assert that, having been acquainted with him when he was admitted to the best society, you, in pity to his poverty and degradation, had relieved him ; that, knowing the severity of your aunt, and her

dislike to foreigners, you had permitted him to come at night to receive from a window the pecuniary aid you afforded : and then detail the fact of his forcible entrance, and the fearful catastrophe that followed. *Enfin*, tell the truth in all, except the circumstance of his ever having been more than a common acquaintance to you ; and resolutely vow that he has invented this tale in order to extort money from you by threatening to circulate it, and to terrify you into a concealment of his guilt.

To carry my advice into effect demands great nerve and self-control ; you used to possess both, but I fear they have deserted you now that you most need them. Remember you have no other means of extricating yourself from the trammels of this monster ; so take courage, adopt my counsel, and all may yet be well.

Pauvre Florestan est dans Saint Pelagie,

and his cruel aunt refuses to pay his debts. I have sent all my jewels to be sold, and *le duc, comme un bon ami*, is raising money in order to procure his freedom. The first day he was arrested I was half dead with sorrow ; for I fancied that my poor Florestan would be shut in a damp, dark cell, chained to the wall, fed on bread and water, and his hands confined. But I find it is no such thing : *au contraire*, Lisette, my *femme de chambre*, whom I sent to him, being too ill to go myself, tells me that he has a very comfortable apartment ; had two or three friends, who are also confined there, to dinner, *un repas très recherché* ; was served by a *restaurant* of the domicile ; and, instead of his hands being secured, they are busily employed in playing *écarté* all the evening.

In short, as Lisette tells me, he leads a far more agreeable life there than he did in

this *triste maison*, where he, *pauvre garçon*, was as *ennuyé* as I am. He read to his friends the passage of my letter in which I detailed the horrors to which I fancied he was exposed ; and Lisette says, they laughed heartily at my notions of St. Pelagie. How like Florestan — *n'est-ce pas?* — to preserve his gaiety even in a prison !

Adieu, *ma chère* Caroline ! Remember, that true philosophy consists in enjoying the good one has attained, and not in lamenting the means used for its attainment ; more especially when such retrospections cannot benefit. With your fortune I should have nothing to desire — or, at least, not desire any thing long that it could supply.

Tout à vous,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

FROM THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO
LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

WE have come to London, *chère* Delphine, to which my husband was summoned the day after my last letter to you, by an express from the ministers, who wish him to take office. He is gratified by this distinction, and I like it because he does; for his affection has awakened a reciprocal feeling in my heart, which I had thought callous and steeled against soft emotions. But where is the nature that can resist the gentle influence of kindness? not in woman's heart, I am sure.

My first entrance into this house was very painful: how many scenes which I would wish to efface for ever from my memory, did it recall! Lord Annandale had, considerately, changed the arrangement of the whole house;

and the apartments appropriated to me are not those occupied by the dear, the wronged Augusta. The furniture, too, is all new ; so that no vestige of its former mistress remains. Yet she is seldom absent from my memory ; *that* recalls her mild and beautiful face to each apartment where she so lately dwelt in innocence and loveliness ; *that* gives back the touching sound of her sweet voice and affectionate words ; and renews, too, the cankering reflection, that I destroyed her.

Lord Annandale's son, the child of which she was so fond, was brought to me the day after my arrival. He came bounding into the room, and rushed to embrace me ; but, on approaching near enough to distinguish my face, he stopped abruptly short, and said,—“ No, it is not my own mamma !” and an expression of the deepest disappointment clouded his little face.

It is clear he still remembers her. Poor, dear Augusta! who that ever experienced her gentleness and affection, could ever forget her? I must not dwell on this theme, for every thought connected with her is fraught with sadness.

Already have all the ancient *habitués* of Annandale House flocked to my doors, with professions of friendship and smiles of welcome. But they find me changed — gravely, if not sadly changed: for I know them too well to esteem or respect them; and I wish to draw round me a circle widely different from theirs, composed of honourable and clever men, and virtuous and dignified women. Such are not rare in England, though they are not frequently to be met in the circle arrogating to itself the appellation of *exclusive* — an appellation I trust it will ever retain — keeping without its pale all the good and wise, whose

qualities must ever unfit them for belonging to it.

And yet, it was in this demoralised society that, a short year ago, I was ambitious to enter! But what changes may not a year produce? I have learned to appreciate virtue, by having strayed from its path; and discovered the hollowness, the deformity of vice, by having, unhappily, approached it too nearly.

How erroneously would persons judge of the English character, who formed their opinions of it from that class among which I formerly lived in London — a class which affects all the frivolity of French society, but which has none of its redeeming qualities — its gaiety, wit, or ease! The more conscious I am of my own demerits, the more do I desire to avoid intimacy with those who are unworthy, and to dwell henceforth among persons I can respect and esteem.

Who can love virtue like those who have experienced the misery produced by vice? Ah, none! and I would fain cling to it (though deeply conscious of my unworthiness), even as the wrecked mariner clings to the shore from which the waves are bearing him.

I am to be presented at court to-morrow, and am to wear, for the first time, the family jewels. It seems like yesterday that I saw poor Augusta wear them on her presentation, when her beauty attracted all eyes. Where is she now? But I must not dwell on this thought.

An aunt of Lord Annandale is to present me; an excellent old lady, and universally beloved and respected. She was absent from England when her nephew married poor Augusta, so never saw her; which is, perhaps, the reason why she is partial to me, not being able to compare me with one so every way

my superior. Lady Wilmington is an especial favourite at court, and numbers among her friends the most estimable of the aristocracy, whose acquaintance she has already procured for me.

The Comtesse of Hohenlinden has left England, which I rejoice at ; and her *coterie* here console themselves for the humiliating flatteries they administered to her when present, by the lavish abuse they bestow on her in her absence. Lord Annandale has quite set his heart on my making a brilliant appearance to-morrow ; he has even superintended the preparations for my *toilette*, and wishes me to wear, in addition to the family jewels, some valuable ones which he has given me.

I shall leave this letter unfinished, that I may write to you, to-morrow, the details of my presentation.

* * * * *

Again, Delphine, the wretch who poisons my existence has asserted his fearful authority over me! and this time in a manner that convinces me I have nothing to hope from his forbearance.

Lord Annandale dined with the ministers yesterday; and I was sitting in my boudoir, superintending the arrangement of some diamonds which my maid was attaching to my court-dress, when the groom of the chambers announced le Chevalier Carency, and that monster entered.

The case of jewels I held in my hand fell to the ground, and I uttered a faint shriek; while Claudine, who, in the elegantly dressed man of fashion before her, did not recognise the mysterious visitant of Annandale Castle, respectfully retired. He approached me with alacrity, kissed my hand with easy politeness, and said that, having only that day arrived

from Paris, he came to deliver a letter, and sundry messages, from our mutual friend, la Marquise de Villeroi. Though I dreaded finding myself alone with him, I dreaded still more the possibility of Claudine's recognising him, if suffered to remain, or to be a witness to an interview in which I felt a presentiment that new demands would be made; so I was glad to see her withdraw. I then asked him why he stood before me?

“The question is neither polite nor hospitable, *ma belle comtesse*,” replied he, with an air of the most insulting familiarity; “*mais n'importe*. I am no longer the ruined mendicant you saw at Annandale Castle, and whose apparition seemed to give you so little pleasure. Your compulsory liberality has enabled me to reassume that place in society to which my birth entitles me: I flatter myself that my appearance would not discredit the most aris-

ocratic *salon* in London;" and he looked in a large mirror with undisguised complacency. "But Fortune owes me a grudge, and pursues me with a *guignon* as provoking as it is inconvenient. Last night I lost a considerable sum, the final remnant of your supply, and I am come to demand another. Seeing in the papers that *monsieur milord, votre mari*, was to dine with the ministers (for the English papers leave us ignorant of none of the engagements of *les messieurs et dames à la mode*), I determined on paying you a visit. Should *milord* arrive before I depart, you will, of course, present me to him as an old friend just arrived from Paris, and the bearer of a letter from your friend, la Marquise de Ville-roi. *Sa seigneurie* will, of course, act *l'aimable*—I, *le gentil*: the acquaintance thus made, leave the rest to me: he shall present me to the persons I desire to know, and all will go

off à merveille. I see that you disapprove this arrangement," added he, with a look of perfect nonchalance; "but I have taken it into my head to enter into fashionable society in London, and your husband is the person I have selected as *chaperon*."

"And you tell this to me," said I, my blood boiling with indignation; "to me, who know you for a robber — for an assassin!"

His countenance assumed a fearful expression of malice as he glanced at me, and replied,—

"Bah, bah! you still remember that little episode; but you appear to forget your own share in it. Who gave me ingress to the house, and who secured my egress from it? Without your aid, I could not have effected the objects to which you refer. But let that pass; I am not here to listen to your tragical

reminiscences. I am come for money, and *must* have it quickly."

I declared that he had taken all my funds at Annandale Castle, and that I had no more.

"What! can you not ask your husband? He is still too short a time married to have ceased to be uxorious enough to be generous to you;" and he looked at me in a way that brought the blood to my cheeks.

"But there is no occasion to have recourse to his liberality," said he, "while these baubles can be converted into money," taking up the diamonds that lay scattered around; "they will do quite as well."

"They must not — cannot be yours!" said I; "they are the family jewels, in which I have only a life-interest."

"Bah, bah!" answered he, "I stand on no such idle ceremony."

As he spoke, he gathered up the scattered

diamonds, placed them in the case, and put it within his coat, which he buttoned over it. In vain I implored him not to take them, and promised to send him money the very next day. He was deaf to my entreaties ; and, having said that, shortly, he would call again, and be presented to *milord*, he rang the bell, and, when the domestic arrived, took a respectful leave of me, and departed.

I am utterly confounded ; and so agitated, by contending emotions, that I am incapable of thinking. Though the jewels are of great value, my husband attaches even more importance to them from the number of years they have been in the family, than from their intrinsic worth. How shall I be able to conceal that I no longer possess them ? How get off appearing at court to-morrow ? I am all in a tremor ! I must lie down, for my head swims, and I can scarcely support myself.

Delphine, I would prefer death to seeing this wretch intrude himself into the presence of my husband, to remind me of a crime I would give worlds to forget, and the memory of which, ever since I became a wife, is more hateful to me than ever. Think of a miscreant, stained with theft — with murder — finding himself beneath the roof of an honourable man, and *I* tacitly sanctioning his monstrous effrontery by my silence! O God, have pity on me!

Lord Annandale found me so ill when he returned, that he was the first to propose my abandoning all thought of going to the drawing-room to-day.

This is a reprieve; but, alas! a brief one; for in ten days more there will be another, and I shall be expected to go. The kindness of my husband melts me to tears—and this was the man I judged so harshly! How my heart

reproaches me; and how I wish I were more worthy of his affection !

When Claudine asked me, last night, for the diamonds to fasten on my dress, I felt my cheeks glow as I told her that I had locked them up.

“ *Madame la comtesse's* illness was very sudden,” observed she; “ for I thought I had not seen *sa seigneurie* so well for a long time as just before that gentleman arrived.”

I was painfully conscious that I again changed countenance.

“ It was strange, *madame la comtesse,*” resumed she, “ that the tones of his voice, and the air of that gentleman, quite startled me, by reminding me of that terrible man who came to *le château d'Annandale.*”

Think how I trembled !

“ One often does see such strange resemblances,” continued she. “ This gentleman is

about the same height, but he has no whiskers ; and then he has not a patch over his eye. *Enfin*, this is a *grand seigneur*, and the other was like a mendicant. Still one reminds me of the other."

How I writhed while she spoke! I think I can perceive — but it may be only my timid sense of guilt that suggests the apprehension — that she already associates in her mind the visit of this man, my sudden indisposition, and the disappearance of the diamonds.

My position is a fearful one, and becomes every day more precarious. The state of incessant agitation and alarm in which this wretch plunges me has destroyed my health ; and there are moments when I feel such a total prostration of physical as well as moral strength, that I am led to think I cannot long sustain this life of wretchedness. This man is my scourge—the avenger of all my sins. Oh!

may the Almighty accept the pangs I now endure as some atonement for my transgressions, and limit my suffering to this life ; permitting me to hope that, in the life to come, I may be pardoned.

Should my prophetic forebodings be realised—should death soon end the insupportable anguish I endure, I entreat — nay, more, I command you, Delphine, to make known to Lord and Lady Vernon, and Lord Annandale, the perfect innocence of the wronged Augusta.

To-day, Delphine, De Carency presented himself in due form at my door. The audacity of this man is not to be imagined. On hearing that I was indisposed, and not visible, he inquired for Lord Annandale, and sent in his card ; was shewn into the library, and acted *l'aimable* so adroitly to my husband, representing himself as an old friend of mine, and the bearer of sundry messages to me from you,

that he received an invitation to dine here on Thursday.

When Lord Annandale came to my dressing-room, and related the interview he had just had, I thought I should have fallen from my chair; but he was fastening one of the studs of his chemise, so did not observe my agitation.

“The expression of le Chevalier Carency’s face does not please me,” said Lord Annandale; “but his manners are remarkably insinuating, notwithstanding a certain *brusquerie* that occasionally breaks forth, indicating that he has spent most of his time in camps. But you say nothing of your friend, dearest, though he professes to have known you since your childhood?”

Think, Delphine, what must have been my feelings!

I said, that I certainly had known him

in my early youth, but that I did not like him.

“ Yet, we must be civil to him,” replied Lord Annandale; “ or he will return to Paris, and tell the Marquise de Villeroi that you behave ill to your former friends. It is astonishing how soon foreigners make themselves *au fait* of what is passing in every country they visit,” continued Lord Annandale, musingly: “ le Chevalier de Carency said some very civil and judicious things, too, about my speech in the House, the other night. By Jove! he understood the bearing of the question wonderfully. He certainly is very clever; and must have been a devilish good-looking fellow, too, *malgré* the *satanique* expression of his eyes and mouth.”

The wretch has already discovered the *côté faible* of my husband, and has availed himself of it most dexterously, if I may judge by the favourable impression he has made;

for Lord Annandale has more than once resorted to what he terms the judicious observations of the chevalier.

Oh, why should vanity, the sole defect in his nature, thus render him the dupe of the vicious and designing! It was by this medium that I acquired an empire over him; and now, one still more unworthy, and still more capable of making the vilest use of it, seems likely to obtain a similar influence. And it is through me that he is brought in contact with this atrocious man! yet I dare not reveal his real character, nor terminate an acquaintance from which I predict some fatal result. Yes, I *will* watch over my husband, and endeavour, if possible, to preserve him from the pollution of this wretch's society. Let him wreak his worst vengeance on me, in preference to injuring this, the only being on earth who loves me.

When I reflect how encompassed I am by the snares of this dreadful man, I feel as if in a dream; and when I hear my husband talk of him, in utter unconsciousness of his real character, I shudder, lest he should, by any fatality, ever be brought into hostile collision with such a monster.

I am continually placed in embarrassing situations with regard to money. No later than this day, Lord Annandale told me that he had put his name to a subscription for the relief of a very deserving family, reduced to poverty by the sudden death of a father who had held a clerkship in a public office too short a time to be entitled to a pension; and he recommended me to subscribe also.

“ Shall I send your money with mine ? ” asked he.

The consciousness of not having a guinea at my command made me feel, and look too,

so embarrassed, that he appeared surprised, and added,—“ Perhaps you disapprove of the system of subscribing; and, if so, I will not urge your compliance.”

He must think me mean, illiberal, and uncharitable, not to have given the money; but it is better that he should entertain this opinion than know that all the funds which his liberality bestowed on me have been expended to purchase the silence of a wretch; or know me for what I am—a degraded, a lost woman—dependent for my position in society on the dearly-bought forbearance of the vilest and most detestable of his sex. I tremble at the thought of meeting this wretch on Thursday; but it would be still worse to have Lord Annandale exposed to his machinations. You shall hear the result of our interview.

Adieu! *Votre*

CAROLINE.

FROM LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO
THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

I REALLY begin to be alarmed, *ma chère* Caroline, at the audacious pertinacity with which De Carency pursues you. He has discovered your dread of him, and will make it a profitable source for levying contributions. I know not what to advise, unless it be that you induce milord to accompany you to Paris, where, should the vile wretch De Carency follow you, we could easily manage to have him thrown into prison. We have only to get some person to swear that he had been seen hovering near the Tuileries with an air-gun in the shape of a cane, or lurking on the route to Neuilly with a pistol in his pocket, and you will be troubled by him no more. Five Louis, judiciously disposed of, will

quicken the sight of as many persons of *le bas peuple* here, and enable them to see any thing their employer suggests.

Imaginez vous mon malheur, ma chère amie!
—*ma mère est morte.* But that is not all: she has left the whole of her fortune to *le père Maubois!*

This is, indeed, a heavy blow; and *pauvre Florestan* and I are nearly overwhelmed by it. I have long expected that she would have bequeathed a considerable portion of her wealth to her Jesuitical confessor; but, that she would leave him all, never entered into my mind.

The only legacy I have received is a letter filled with reproaches for my extravagance and errors, and an exhortation to turn from my evil courses ere it be too late. My *liaison* with the *duc* she stigmatises as a crime of the deepest die, meriting opprobrium here,

and perdition hereafter. In short, never was there such an epistle. It is, however, well calculated to preclude any very deep regret for the writer ; though it prevents not my chagrin for the loss of my fortune. *Quelle mère dénaturée !*

Ma tante, avec cette douceur et cette amabilité qui la distinguent, appears more gratified than grieved by our cruel disappointment. She knows that we are now wholly in her power, and hers is not a nature to use that power generously. How right you were, ma chère Caroline, when you pronounced her to be aussi méchante que bête !

I must leave you, as *ma couturière* has come to take my orders for my mourning. How I hate black ! for it makes me look so ill. I shall resume my letter when *Victorine* departs.

Only fancy what has occurred,— never was there such a piece of meanness! *Madame ma tante* came into the room where I had left my unfinished letter to you, while I was giving my instructions to Victorine for my mourning, and had the want of decency to read what I had written. She was frantic with rage at the mention made of herself in it, and vows vengeance against me and you.

You, fortunately, are out of her reach; but on poor me it will fall heavily. It was very unthinking of me to leave the letter open upon my desk; but who could dream of her being guilty of so reprehensible an action as that of reading the letter of another! and beneath her own roof, too! What a violation of the rights of hospitality and decorum!

She declares she will reveal my *liaison* with the *duc* to Florestan. Little does she imagine

that it has long been no secret to him: he, *pauvre cher homme*, was always reasonable, and adopted the philosophical system which takes for its motto, *vivre et laissez vivre*.

This ancient dame was positively transformed into a fury by the perusal of my letter. She looked a very Megara, with her bleared eyes, and withered cheeks flushed to crimson by the violence of her anger.

“ *I, bête! I, méchante!*” exclaimed she; “ what a vile calumny! and this, too, from you, base and ungrateful woman! who owe me so much — on whom I have lavished such generosity and kindness. Yes, your mother was right to disinherit you. She knew your wickedness, and has punished you in the only vulnerable point — your love of wealth. The example shall not be lost, depend upon it. The *méchante bête* shall find means to repay you for all your sins!”

Thus saying, she left the room, darting at me the most infuriated glances.

I have reflected long and deeply on the subject, and now pronounce, that all the evils in this life emanate from poverty. Were I in possession of the fortune to which I had a right, this old Tisiphone could not insult and humiliate me; Florestan would not be in a prison, and *I* should not be wretched — for wretched I am — at this moment. Should she expel me from her house, I know not where to go, unless to the Comtesse de Hauteforte's; and she, of late, has been so negligent in writing to me, and so altered in her manner, when I have called on her, that the alternative is far from being an agreeable one.

I will despatch *ma femme de chambre*, in whom I can confide, with a letter detailing my vexatious position to *le duc*; he will sympathise with me, for on his affection I can count,—

and this is indeed a consolation under present annoyances. I have seldom seen him of late, for my aunt, not content with prohibiting his visits at her hotel, has so strenuously insisted on my not meeting him elsewhere, that, to preserve peace in her *triste maison*, I have only rarely had an interview with him at Madame de Hauteforte's, who affected to be prudish about it. This conduct is *un peu ridicule, n'est-ce pas?*—having so long known our attachment: and not a little ungrateful, considering that I have always thrown the shield of my friendship over her equivocal *liaison* with my husband. I was, also, much hurt by observing the indifference she has evinced with regard to Florestan's incarceration. She even permitted herself to make some ill-timed reflections on his extravagant habits, and incorrigible propensity to gaming; which came with a bad grace from her, who had profited so

frequently and so largely by his profuse generosity. Since our change of fortune, I have discovered that people are much less cordial and friendly than formerly; and I begin to believe that the friendships formed in gay society are not endowed with much stability. Alas! why should we only acquire wisdom by misfortune? the severity of the school is not compensated by the value of the knowledge acquired in it.

A letter from *ma tante* — the most cruel, the most reproachful, that ever was written. She orders me to leave her house; and adds, that a *méchante bête* can be no fit associate for a lady so *spirituelle* as I am. The truth of that unlucky phrase she cannot forgive; proving the correctness of the old proverb which says, that “it is only the truth that offends.”

I know not what to do, nor where to go.

Friends on whom, previously to our pecuniary embarrassments, I thought I might safely count, have all looked so coldly on me since that epoch, that my pride revolts from seeking their aid in this hour of need. The *duc* is, I know, of late, greatly straitened in his own finances; therefore, from him I can expect little more than sympathy and affection. There is no one to whom I can apply, except *la Comtesse de Hautefort*, who has received too many proofs of kindness from me, and of generosity from my husband, not to evince hospitality to me under my present distressing circumstances. How mortifying, how humiliating, to be reduced to so painful a dilemma!

Bless your stars, *chère* Caroline, that you are rich; for, to a proud spirit, there is no evil like poverty: nay, it includes all the others.

I have no money, for your generous loan

I sent to poor Florestan; who, alas! in his imprudence, has squandered it all away in giving *recherché* dinners in St. Pelagie. *Mais, après tout*, I cannot much blame the poor fellow; for there are so few ways of passing the time in that wretched place, that it is not either very surprising or very reprehensible that he should have fallen into this folly, *pour s'amuser*.

Florestan was always so indulgent to my weaknesses, that it would be inexcusable of me not to extend a similar forbearance to his. Poor Florestan! You may laugh at me as much as you please, Caroline; ay, as much as in days of yore, when you used to say that our love resembled that of *une couple bourgeoise*, rather than the polite indifference of two persons of *la haute noblesse*: but I do still retain a sentiment of affection towards my husband, that might, had we never lived in

the gay society of Paris, have formed the happiness of us both. *Mais, à quoi bon ces tristes reflexions?* And yet our position is well calculated to give rise to such, — Florestan the inmate of a prison, where evil example corrupts and debases the mind, rendering vicious companionship and loose indulgences, which at first disgusted him, habitual; and I driven with insult from the shelter of his aunt's roof, to seek one beneath that of—his mistress!

To be sure my present abode never proved otherwise than disagreeable; still I would prefer it to that of Madame de Hauteforte's, whose coldness and *hauteur* of late have displeased me. Do you know, *ma chère*, that *malgré* all my boasted philosophy, I could sit down and weep at the painful embarrassment in which I find myself, but I am preserved from this unavailing weakness by the reflection that, were I to weep until I became a second Niobe, my position

would not be ameliorated : *au contraire*, I should only spoil my eyes, which are one of the few advantages still left to me, and few people are disposed to serve ugly or *larmoyantes* women. Having lost my fortune, I must not also lose my good looks ; and though I am your affectionate, must not become your ugly friend,

DELPHINE, MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO
LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

NEVER, *chère* Delphine, shall I forget what I have endured this evening, in the society of that miscreant, De Carency !

He presented himself, dressed perfectly *à-la-mode* ; and, strange to say, has resumed the air and tone of good company so completely, that, on listening to, and regarding

him, I could scarcely imagine that he was the coarse and brutalised ruffian I beheld in the country. He approached me without the slightest symptom of embarrassment ; delivered several amiable messages purporting to come from you ; and referred to our ancient friendship in Italy, in a manner to induce the persons present to suppose that he must be one of my chosen friends.

How I felt my cheeks glow at his allusion to the most fatal event of my life — my acquaintance with this monster ! But, instead of being diverted from the subject by my evident distress, he seemed to have a pleasure in exercising this species of torture over me, probably in revenge for the marked coldness of my manner towards him.

We had several people to dinner, to many of whom Lord Annandale presented him ; and he acted the agreeable so effectually, that I

saw, with secret horror, that he was establishing an acquaintance with them by the most assiduous attentions and animated conversation.

He sat next Lady Godalming—the fastidious and hypercritical Lady Godalming.—and displayed so much tact in the judicious compliments rather implied than expressed to her, that I heard her offer him a ticket for Almack's, and invite him to her next *soirée*. Good heavens! could she but imagine the crimes of this man, how would she shrink from the possibility of meeting him!

During dinner, more than once I anxiously and stealthily observed the servants, to endeavour to infer from their looks whether, like my *femme de chambre*, they suspected, if they had not detected, the identity of the well-dressed man of fashion before them and the unsightly ruffian whose ferocity had filled

them with fear and disgust : but, fortunately, they seemed to entertain no suspicions.

When cards were introduced in the evening, he made one of the whist-table of the Marquess of Haverfordwest, whose opinion he conciliated by approving his play, and referring, with a deferential air, to his judgment. He lost; and, when paying, displayed a case well stocked with notes to a large amount, the sight of which seemed to establish his claims to the consideration of not a few of those around him. Lord Haverfordwest immediately invited him to his house; and Lord Derbyshire, in his most insinuating tone, told him that he would get him elected an honorary member of the Travellers' Club, where, as he evidently liked a rubber of whist, he might find one every night.

“ *Le Chevalier* is a very agreeable man,” said Lord Haverfordwest to me; “ but a very

indifferent whist-player. I foresee that he will become popular in London; for he loses his money without, as is too often the case, losing his temper also; and pays his twenties and fifties with more *sang-froid* than other men exhibit in losing their guineas. Yes, he will be vastly popular, I foresee."

"What a very *distingué* personage your friend, le Chevalier de Carency, is," remarked Lady Godalming. "He is of the noble family De Carency, near Turin, is he not? How easy it is to see that he is one of *l'ancienne noblesse*; that *ton de bonne compagnie*, that *air comme il faut*, and, above all, the tact with which he insinuates, rather than pays, a compliment. Yes, these *agremens* are only to be found in the descendants of the ancient *noblesse*."

So, here is the fastidious Lady Godalming caught by his flattery; and the supercilious Lord Haverfordwest, one of the most influen-

tial leaders of fashionable society, conciliated by this artful and designing man's affectation of being a bad whist-player, who loses his money freely, and can pay when he loses. Even so long ago as the period when he was at Florence, he had the reputation of being an adept at whist; consequently, I am persuaded his careless play was all a *ruse*, to deceive those around him.

He found means to approach me, during the evening, and murmured in my ear,—

“Beware how you venture to display the *fierté* and coldness with which you have treated me this day; for I have the power, ay, and the inclination too, if you provoke me to it, to take ample vengeance on you.”

While uttering this audacious threat, the shameless dissembler was smiling as gaily and as insinuatingly as though he were addressing to me the most elegant compliments.

But, in spite of the indignation which his atrocious tyranny excited in me, I felt the dread influence he exercises over me; and that, though in a splendid home, and surrounded by the great and noble, I was only his puppet—the enslaved, debased concealer, if not the abettor, of the crimes of the foulest and most loathsome monster that ever disgraced mankind.

Every sound of his voice makes me tremble; every glance of his eye, like that of the basilisk, transfixes his victim. I know not how my agitation escaped general remark: but Lord Annandale alone spoke of it; and *he* attributed it to my recent indisposition. I thought the party would never have terminated; and, when at length they went away, a violent hysterical attack, with which I was seized, alarmed my dear and kind husband so much, that he sent for my physician, who prescribed

quiet and repose — two blessings that are only for those free from guilt, and which never more will be mine on earth. Well might I have exclaimed, when the doctor was recommending restoratives, and gentle opiates,—

“ Can’st thou not minister to a mind diseased ;
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow ;
Raze out the written troubles of the brain ;
And, with some sweet, oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart ? ”

Little do those around me dream of the terrific thralldom in which I, the object of envy to so many, am placed. Yet there is one whose eye is often upon me, and with an expression of suspicious scrutiny beneath which mine never fails to drop. This vigilant observer is, I scarcely need add, Claudine. Her whole manner towards me is changed ever since De Carency’s visit to Annandale Castle.

There is a want of respect in it; yet a sort of pity, too, even more humiliating than her familiarity. I have her as little near me as possible, and she perceives that our separation is intentionally arranged by me; a slight which piques her into increased *brusquerie*. Oh, the misery, the degradation of being subjected to the insolence of our own menials! But what is this minor misery in comparison with the overwhelming ones that I must endure? Delphine, this state of things cannot long continue; I feel as if the principle of life was giving way beneath the fearful mental sufferings to which I am a prey, and as if reason were tottering on her throne.

Adieu, *chère* Delphine, I am too ill to add more than that I am always your affectionate friend,

CAROLINE.

THE COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE TO
LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI.

I WRITE to you, *ma chère* Delphine, while Lord Annandale is at the House of Lords : I have given orders to be denied to all visitors, and find a relief in unburdening my over-charged breast to you.

But first let me express, though I can only faintly do so, how deeply, how truly, I deplore the painful circumstances in which you and poor Florestan are placed. I must, however, do more than sympathise with you, *ma pauvre chère amie*. The five thousand pounds bequeathed me by the dear and wronged Augusta, shall be forthwith remitted to Paris, and placed at your disposal. If it be sufficient to extricate Florestan from prison I shall rejoice ; if not, it will, at all events, conduce to

render his *sejour* in that melancholy abode less annoying, and leave you less dependent on his aunt. Do not wrong me, *chère* Delphine, by supposing that I could now smile, as in past times, at the affection of Florestan and yourself. Far from it; I would conjure you both to cultivate it to the utmost, convinced, as I now am, that happiness is to be found alone in domestic love, — the only love that is free from sorrow or reproach.

A parcel has just been brought me, containing the most beautiful pair of diamond bracelets imaginable, a gift from Lord Annandale. How he overpowers me with generosity and tenderness, of which I know myself to be so unworthy! How strange and inscrutable is the human heart! If, when I formed my vile and wicked scheme of destroying the reputation of the pure, the sainted Augusta, in

order to take her place, any one had told me that I should ever entertain the affection for Lord Annandale which I now feel, I should have smiled in derision at the seeming improbability. Yet I do love him — not, it is true, with the wild and enthusiastic passion of early youth, but with a tenderness and a gratitude which continued kindness could alone excite. This new-born sentiment adds to my misery, by making me tremble at the possibility of the loss of his — a misfortune inevitable, should he discover my crimes.

A letter from Paris, but the superscription is not in your hand, so I shall let it remain unopened for the present.

Hark! I hear some one coming; it must be — it is, my dear, my kind husband.

* * * * *

LA MARQUISE DE VILLEROI TO THE
COUNTESS OF ANNANDALE.

PLAIGNEZ moi, ma chère Caroline, car je suis la plus malheureuse de femmes. Deceived by him I trusted, by him for whom I incurred my mother's lasting displeasure and my own reproach. I am wretched, and I know not where to turn for consolation.

I told you in my last that I had written to the *duc*, to inform him of the disagreeable dilemma in which I am placed, and to state my intention of seeking an asylum at the Comtesse de Hauteforte's. When Lisette returned from his hotel, I perceived an expression of mingled anger and grief in her countenance, that I fancied boded me no good; and when I tore open the letter, alas! my fears were but too well confirmed. His mode of address-

ing me was so constrained, so cold and ceremonious, that I had not perused three lines of his note before I felt convinced he no longer loved me. I questioned Lisette as to the cause of her changed aspect; dreading, yet impatient to learn, if it had any reference to the *duc*, or if she could explain the cause of his estrangement. My reiterated commands to tell me *all* she knew, drew from her the confession that François, the *valet de chambre* of the *duc*, who had long since promised her marriage, had treated her with the utmost coldness and disdain. The poor creature wept bitterly while she related her lover's cruelty. He had told her that the *duc* had commanded him to break off his attachment to mademoiselle Lisette, and to transfer it to the *femme de chambre* of the lady with whom he, the *duc*, is at present in love. Think, *chère* Caroline, what I felt at hearing this! The blood receded

from my tortured heart, and rushed to my brain, which has ever since throbbed with agony.

“ I told François, *madame la marquise*,” resumed Lisette, “ that if *monsieur le duc* was faithless, that was no excuse for *his* being so, and reminded him of all the promises he had made me ; but, would *madame la marquise* believe it, the perfidious François said, that he must obey his master’s orders ; and added, that he had only offered his vows to me because the *duc* commanded him, it being the general usage for the *valet de chambre* to form an attachment to the *femme de chambre* of the lady preferred by his master.”

How was my pride and delicacy wounded by this speech of the weeping Lisette ! I really felt ashamed to meet her eye.

“ *Ah ! madame la marquise*,” sobbed she, “ *nous sommes bien à plaindre, car nous sommes toutes les deux trompées ; vous, par le maître ; et*

moi, par le valet. Ah! les hommes, les hommes! ils sont tous de même, et nous sommes toujours leurs dupes! I endeavoured, but, alas! in vain, *madame*, to discover who the lady is to whom *monsieur le duc* is at present attached, in order that I might know who my rival is, but *ce perfide François* refused to give me the slightest clue. *Ah! le vilain homme, comme il m'a trompé!*"

Who can it be that has seduced the faithless *duc* from his allegiance? Yes, it is, it must be, the Duchesse de Harfleur. I now remember he used to praise her beauty; and I, fool that I was, joined in his admiration. Again I have perused his letter. He advises me to leave no means untried in order to effect a reconciliation with *ma tante*, and on no account to seek an asylum with the Comtesse de Hauteforte. He never liked her, or approved of my friendship for her; but what

interest can he now have in where I go, or what becomes of me? Ah! I guess the motive for his advice. He knows that the Duchesse de Harfleur is on habits of intimacy with the Comtesse de Hauteforte; and dreads that, beneath her roof, I should become acquainted with his perfidy. I will instantly go to her, for she is now my sole refuge. *She*, at least, will pity, if she cannot console me.

I am distracted, Caroline! My brain burns, and my heart throbs nearly to bursting. Never was there such deception, such baseness, as that to which I have been made the victim! But let me relate the particulars to you while I have yet strength to do so, for the combined effects of conflicting passions have rendered me so ill, that I am almost incapable of the exertion.

I left off writing to you, to proceed to Madame de Hauteforte's — it maddens me to write her odious name. On arriving at her *porte cochere*, I saw the cabriolet of that false and heartless man, the *duc*, and instantly concluded that he had sought an interview with her thus early, to urge her to go and advise me to conciliate *ma tante*. Her porter told my servant that *madame la comtesse* was not at home; on hearing which, I assured him that his mistress would certainly receive *my* visit, although she excluded all others. He shook his head, looked incredulous, and I again repeated that the *comtesse* would be sure to receive me.

“ I am very sorry to refuse *madame la marquise* the *entrée*,” replied he, “ *mais quoi faire?* *Madame la comtesse* has given strict orders that *no one* is to be admitted when

monsieur le duc is with her, and there is no day in which I am not compelled to send away visitors, but the fault is not mine."

Such was my rage and indignation, that I felt capable, at that moment, of committing any folly—nay, more, any crime. I longed to force my way to the presence of this perfidious pair, and to overwhelm them with my just reproaches; but, as I caught the glances of the porter, and my own servant, I was recalled to a sense of prudence, and determined on not exposing myself to their animadversions by any display of the jealousy and anger that was torturing me. I drove to St. Pelagie to see poor Florestan, and make him acquainted with the perfidy of both these wretches.

Had you seen him, Caroline, your heart, like mine, would have ached at the terrible change that has taken place in his appearance; and the still more terrible one in his habits and

manners. When I had informed him of what I came to relate, he burst into a frantic laugh, and then, for the first time, I discovered that he was intoxicated. Yes, Caroline, even at two o'clock in the afternoon he was in a state that at once alarmed and disgusted me.

“And so, my poor Delphine, you have been duped as well as I!” exclaimed he, his utterance impeded by a hiccough; “*mais soyez tranquille, chère amie, tu seras vengé, je t'en repond.*”

He lavished every possible term of reproach on the *duc* and *comtesse*; and revealed to me, that more than half his pecuniary embarrassments had been occasioned by the sums he had raised, at usurious interest, to extricate them from theirs. Yes, Caroline, I, who foolishly believed that the *duc* had, on more than one occasion, come forward to assist my poor Florestan, and felt grateful to him for it, have now ascertained

that he, like the vile object of his present preference, has plunged him in ruin.

Yet, in the midst of intoxication, and its debasing effects, the good heart and kind disposition of my poor husband shone conspicuous. I could have wept over his degradation, forgetful of my own, in the interest and pity he excited.

“ *Oui, ma pauvre Delphine,*” said he, “ *cette méchante coquine étoit toujours jalouse de toi — toi, qui étoit si gentille, si bon enfant, qui ne m’a jamais cherché querelle. Elle étoit fâchée, quand je te donnois le plus petit cadeau, et avide d’en recevoir elle même ; mais je l’arrangerai, soyez en sure ; et lui aussi, le coquin !*”

I have taken a lodging close to St. Pelagie, that I may be near my poor Florestan, the only friend I now have. I shall pass all my days with him during his incarceration, and endeavour to wean him from this dreadful

habit of intoxication, which has been, I am convinced, induced by solitude and depression of spirits. Why have I so long left him a prey to their influence? I hear a noise — a cry and weeping; what can it be?

Madame la comtesse,—It has become my painful task to conclude the letter of my unfortunate niece. She is no more! having closed her errors by a crime that has plunged us all in terror and dismay. Yes, madame, a life of folly has been terminated by suicide. Her unhappy husband, my nephew, having fallen, mortally wounded, by the sword of her seducer, the wretched wife struck by horror and remorse, has destroyed herself by laudanum. How far your evil example and counsel may have tended to produce this fearful catastrophe, I leave your own conscience to

determine. Do not stifle its whispers ; but, ere it be too late, turn from your wickedness, and seek, by repentance, to make your peace with an offended God.

Your voluminous correspondence with my unfortunate niece I have looked over, sealed up, and addressed to Lord Vernon, the bereaved father, who owes to your vile machinations the stain cast on the honour of his innocent daughter, and, eventually, that daughter's death. I was tempted to consign these proofs of your duplicity and wickedness to the husband you have duped, and whose name you dishonour ; but, on reflection, I have refrained from so doing, to prove that I am not "*aussi méchante que bête,*" as you pronounced me to be.

You, madam, have ever piqued yourself on your *esprit*. Let me now ask you, what have been its results ? Ruin, dishonour, and death,

to all whose destiny you could influence, and to yourself, — But no, I leave your fate unpredicted; for it needs no sibyl's prescience to divine, that it must be as dark as your crimes.

ELEONORE, DUCHESSE DE CHATEAUNEUF.

FROM THE MARQUESS OF NOTTINGHAM TO
EDWARD MORDAUNT, ESQ.

MY DEAR MORDAUNT, — Recalled to England by the dangerous illness of my sister, I find myself again in London, after more than a year's absence, with broken health, and spirits so depressed, as to render a sojourn in this gay metropolis most uncongenial to my feelings. Though the grief that drove me from my native land has been calmed by time and reason, enough of old regrets remain to unfit me from mingling with those from whom I

can expect no sympathy, and whose presence awakens only painful recollections.

My first inquiries have been for Lord and Lady Vernon. They are, God be thanked! better than I dared to hope. The Delawards have devoted much of their time to console them; and they have succeeded in reconciling them to the decrees of Providence, the more easily from the conviction the excellent and bereaved parents feel, of being, ere long, reunited to her they have lost.

Lady Delaward is the mother of a daughter, whom she has named Augusta, and to whom Lord and Lady Vernon are fondly attached.

You have, of course, heard that Annandale is married to Miss Montessor. Does not this union explain the motive of the scheme against the honour and peace of the wronged and innocent being I deplore? a scheme in which, even from the commencement, I suspected Miss

Montessor to be implicated. I shuddered on hearing of the unholy nuptials. Unhappy Annandale! how has he been duped! He,

“ Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away,
Richer than all his tribe !”

My sister's malady has assumed a more favourable aspect, and her physicians think that the influence of a milder climate may restore her to health. I shall accompany her to Italy, and devote all my time and attention to this, the only tie that now binds me to life.

A most fearful piece of intelligence has this moment been communicated to me. How inscrutable are the ways of Providence! Annandale is no more. He has been murdered by the Chevalier de Carency—the seducer of the wife has been the assassin of the husband. Lord Calderwood has given me the particulars

of this horrid affair, and has been with one or two friends of the family to Annandale House, and heard the depositions of the servants. The evidence of the *femme de chambre* of the wretched Lady Annandale proves, that having entertained suspicions disadvantageous to the Chevalier de Carency, she had communicated them to the *valet de chambre*; and both agreed, when that wretch insisted on seeing their lady (though informed by the porter that she was not visible), to remain in waiting in the ante-room, where they could overhear what occurred. The *valet* and *femme de chambre* state, that on *le chevalier's* entering the chamber, he reproached the countess, in terms of gross insolence, for having refused to receive him. Lady Annandale spoke in so low a tone of voice that they heard not her reply, but he menaced her loudly and violently. They distinctly heard him demand money from her;

and, shortly after, exultingly exclaim, "It is well! these diamonds shall be mine." Lady Annandale appeared greatly agitated, entreated him not to take the diamonds, promising that, if he returned them to her, she would, on the next day, give him the money he required; but he refused to comply with her request. They heard the unhappy woman exclaim, "On my knees, I entreat you—I implore you, restore to me the bracelets! my husband will expect to see them, and, if I cannot produce them, I shall be ruined."

At this moment they heard Lord Annandale ascend the stairs; and they had only time to retreat into another room when they heard him struggling with *le chevalier*, and the countess uttering frantic cries. They gave the alarm; the servants rushed into the room, and discovered their lord mortally wounded by a poniard, and his wretched wife senseless on the

body of her murdered husband. The assassin was seized after a desperate resistance ; and on his person was found a pair of diamond bracelets, which had that day been presented to Lady Annandale by her lord, as was proved by an unfinished letter open on her table.

The suite of apartments occupied by *le chevalier*, at a fashionable hotel, have been searched ; and several valuable articles of jewellery, since recognised by the *femme de chambre* as having belonged to her mistress, as well as various other trinkets, were found, which, it is supposed, will lead to the discovery of other crimes.

The vile assassin is committed to prison, and an inquest is now being held on the body of the unfortunate Annandale. To-morrow we shall hear the result. My nerves have been greatly shaken by this horrid catastrophe, which has excited general consternation in

London. The wretched Lady Annandale has been delirious ever since the murder; and her health has lately been so much impaired, that her recovery is doubtful.

I send you the particulars of the evidence that transpired at the inquest.

The coroner's inquest has brought in a verdict of wilful murder against le Chevalier de Carency, who is committed to prison. The *femme de chambre* stated, on her examination, that she saw this man, for the first time, about a year and a quarter ago, in the village of Langley, near to which the countess was then residing with her aunt: that he at that period appeared in a state of the most abject poverty, and attracted her notice, as being a very suspicious-looking person. The next morning the aunt of the countess was found strangled in her bed,—her *escritoire* and jewel-case rifled; and,

though the doors and windows of the house were all found fastened on the inside, which precluded the belief that the murderer could have entered or left the house, she still had, more than once, associated the dreadful event with the apparition of the suspicious-looking man she had seen that day in the village. The steward of the murdered lady was tried for, and convicted of the murder, owing to a ring and bank-note belonging to her having been found in his possession.

About seven weeks ago, the prisoner came to Annandale Castle, disguised in a light-coloured wig and large mustaches. He inquired for the *femme de chambre*, and gave her a letter for her lady, which he insisted on her delivering, in a very peremptory tone. She thought she recognised him; but the change in the colour of his hair and mustaches made her doubtful.

Her mistress was exceedingly agitated on receiving the letter, and seemed greatly alarmed and apprehensive. That night she gave her a packet, which felt as if it contained bank-notes, to deliver to the prisoner when he called the next day ; which order she fulfilled. Her lady never appeared the same since ; but was always apprehensive and nervous. The servants, who saw the prisoner at Annandale Castle, remarked his bad countenance and suspicious looks.

Soon after the family came to London, Claudine Gauchet was in the boudoir of her ladyship, attaching some diamonds to the sleeves of a court dress, to be worn next day at the drawing-room, when the prisoner was announced. The countess became so agitated, on seeing him enter, that she let fall the *écriin* containing the jewels. The prisoner was dressed like a *grand seigneur*, and had left off

his light-coloured wig, whiskers, and mustaches. The countess dismissed Claudine, though the latter could see that her ladyship dreaded an interview with the prisoner.

In an hour after she was summoned to her lady, whom she found much indisposed; and never since saw the diamonds, until she recognised some of them which were found in the prisoner's apartments. Her ladyship had told her that she had locked up the jewels, which statement Claudine did not credit. The servants, who had seen the prisoner at Annandale Castle, did not at first recollect him when he came to the town house; yet, notwithstanding the metamorphosis in his appearance, they now identified him. Claudine always thought her lady entertained for him a strong dislike, as well as dread.

When the prisoner dined with his lordship, a few days ago, Claudine observed that her

lady seemed agitated and nervous ; and, when the party broke up, her ladyship had an hysterical attack.

I add a few more particulars connected with the late terrible event. I have just learned, that among the valuable jewels discovered in the trunks of the Chevalier Carency, some have been identified as having belonged to the late Mrs. Wickenham, the aunt of the wretched Lady Annandale, who was robbed and murdered some fifteen months ago. Two portraits, from which the diamond setting had been broken, were found ; and the *femme de chambre* of the deceased lady, who had been sent for, has recognised them, and other articles, as having been the property of her mistress, in whose possession she saw them only the day before her death. The prisoner is, therefore, now accused of the murder of

Mrs. Wickenham; and, what is remarkable, has been identified by the landlord of the village alehouse where he stopped, who recognised him by the circumstance of his wanting the little finger of the left hand; to which fact one of his children drew the landlord's attention when the prisoner was eating his supper.

The culprit evinces the utmost obduracy, and refuses all explanation. Lady Annandale continues in an extremely dangerous state, without a single lucid interval since the death of her husband.

What a fearful monster is this De Carency! but he will soon meet the just punishment of his fiendish atrocities.

I have this moment heard that the guilty and unhappy Lady Annandale is no more. Wretched woman! fearful to others and to

herself have been the effects of her guilt ; for, even in the accomplishment of her schemes, she found only the remorse and misery that never fail, sooner or later, to await on crime.

Ever, my dear Mordaunt,

Sincerely yours,

NOTTINGHAM.

THE END.

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