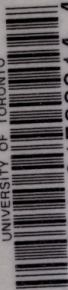
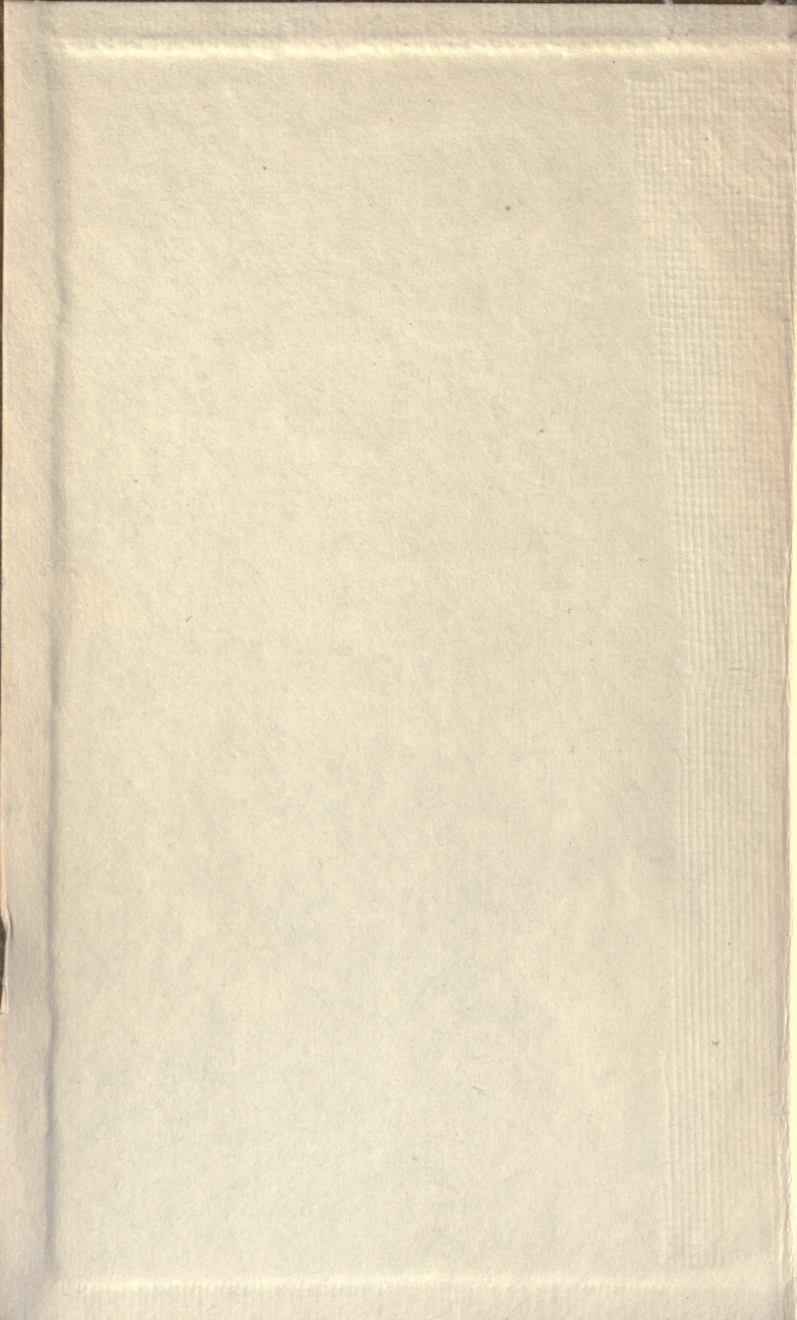
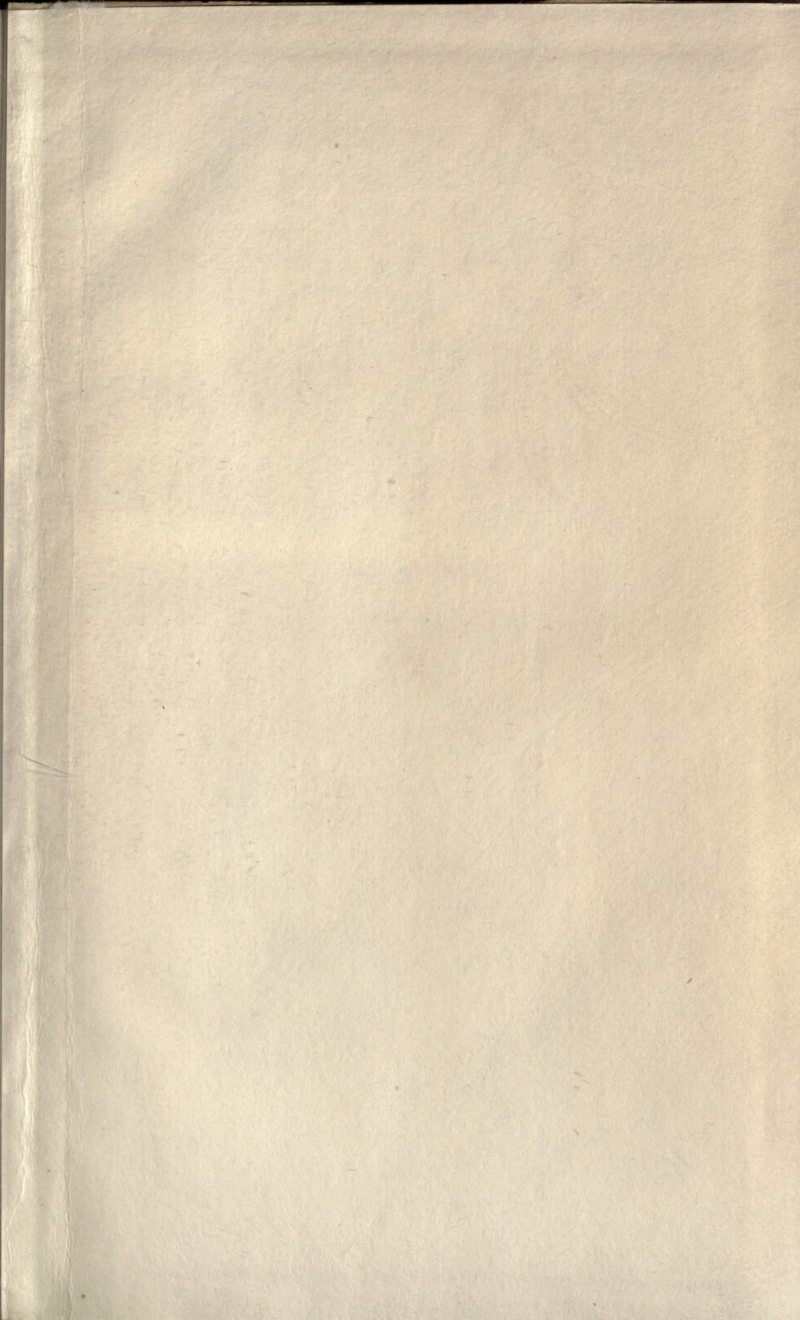


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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M Fairfield from
her friend Mrs Tracy
Sept^r 20 1828

LETTERS

FROM

THE MOUNTAINS :

BEING

THE REAL CORRESPONDENCE

OF

A LADY,

BETWEEN THE YEARS 1773 AND 1807.

Anne Grant

..... "Memory swells
With many a proof of recollected love."

THOMSON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

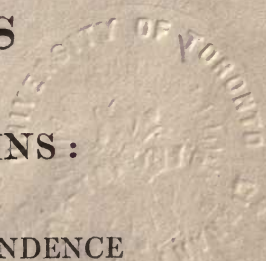
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VOL. I.
.....

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

BOSTON :

PRINTED BY GREENOUGH AND STEBBINS,
Suffolk-Buildings.....Congress-Street.

1809.



Mrs Grant, of Lagy

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TO

MY SURVIVING CORRESPONDENTS.

TO you, my dear Friends, whose affection has been the cordial of my life, and whose sympathy has been the solace of my afflictions ; to you whom neither absence, distance, nor the revolution of years have estranged from me ; you, whom the influx of prosperity never raised above me, and who never withheld the consideration which mind pays to mind, from the darkest hour of my adversity ; To you I inscribe these Letters, which you have kindly permitted me to illuminate with names, which accredit the writer, and totally destroy the unjust surmise, — that you are all “ like

some gay creatures of the element, the creation of an exuberant fancy." To those who could suppose me capable of such an imposition, I only wish that, by being connected by ties as tender, with minds as estimable, they may be convinced of the possibility of your existence.

January 27, 1807.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE FIRST LONDON EDITION.

LEST any of my readers should indulge the expectation of meeting, in the ensuing pages, either ingenious fiction or amusing narrative, it is but candid to undeceive them.

The simple and careless Letters here offered to the publick, carry in themselves the evidences of originality. They are genuine, but broken and interrupted sketches of a life spent in the most remote obscurity. Of the little interest such sketches might possess, much is lost by the necessity of withholding those parts which contained most of narrative and anecdote.

Why letters should be published at all, comprehending so little to excite interest or gratify curiosity, is a question that naturally suggests itself. It cannot be truly said that the gratification of the reader could form an adequate motive for their publication: and, from the nature of them, it is obvious that the unknown author could have no purpose of vanity to answer by it. Yet may not a picture, seldom drawn, peculiar in its shades and scenery, true to nature, and chastely coloured; may not such a picture amuse, for a while, the leisure of the idle and contemplative?—and it is hoped, that the images here offered of untutored sentiment, of the tastes, the feelings, and

habits of those, who, in the secret shades of privacy, cultivate the simple duties and kindly affections of domestick life, may not be without utility.

The soul that rises above its condition, and feels undefined and painful aspirations after unattainable elegance and refinement, may here find an inducement to remain in safe obscurity, contented with the love of truth, of nature, and the

“ Humanising Muse ;”

while those distinguished beings, who are at once the favourites of nature and of fortune, may learn to look with complacency on their fellow-minds in the vale of life, and to know that they too have their enjoyments.

The hope of such a result might, in some degree, console the writer of “ *Letters from the Mountains*,” for the painful circumstance that has elicited their publication.

March 18, 1806.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND LONDON EDITION.

WHEN the writer of these Letters was impelled to submit them to the publick eye, unknown, unpatronized, nameless, without partial review or favourable critick, or any prop visible or invisible, her prospect of succeeding was very faint and dubious. Her only hope, of even partial attention, was founded upon that love of truth, which, for the best moral purposes, is implanted in the human heart ; that generous instinct, which lives in the unsophisticated mind, and which feels and acknowledges the language of nature and native feeling, wherever it is heard. Reality, in short, was the prop on which I leant ; and it has not deceived me. Minds rich in every intellectual endowment, whose talents give brilliancy to their virtues, and whose virtues give solidity, value, and effect to their talents ; minds, to which even the worthy and the wise have been accustomed to look up for light, have shed the lustre of their approbation on the simple sketches of narrative and description, the artless effusions of the heart and imagination, which constitute the whole interest of the following selection. It is for such minds as these to distinguish the durable pencil of truth from the water-colours of fiction ; and it is not for their satisfaction, but to carry conviction home to a different and inferior class of

readers, that the undeniable proofs of a genuine correspondence are about to appear in a second edition. This edition, drawn forth by the generous encouragement of those whom the publick voice has ranked among the worthy and the wise, is not, like the former, attended by the severe, the nameless pangs of anxious diffidence. Yet, in the present case, how oppressive is gratitude, and how painful is self-denial. With what delight, were it permitted me, or could my voice confer distinction, should I enumerate my patrons; but more especially my patronesses. Cheered by their applause, exalted by their esteem, and essentially benefited by their liberality, it would be a proud triumph indeed, were I at liberty to name those virtuous, elegant, and enlightened females, of whom it is not enough to say, that they do honour to England, as they are indeed an ornament to human nature. If one durst draw forth retiring worth from its chosen privacy, I should be tempted to boast, that the same elegant and amiable mind which captivated Cowper in its epistolary effusions (which he declared to excel any others of the kind he had met with), I should boast, I say, that the same mind had exerted its active beneficence, and poured forth its invaluable kindness for me. But it is best to be silent on a subject where one must needs say too little, or be thought to say too much.

To my old, beloved, and long tried friends, I have made a separate acknowledgment. Their personal appearance in my behalf may perhaps have the effect of swelling affected contempt into real envy. Yet 'tis rather hard, that they should be reduced to the necessity so

humorously described in the fable, where the criticks so often contemned the likeness which the painter had drawn, that he was forced, for the vindication of his art, to desire the original to exhibit his countenance through the canvass ;—this too they declared no likeness, till the man spoke out to the utter confusion of criticism.

May 14, 1807.

important, it is in the fact, when the critics as
they concerned the Bishop, which the printer had
known that he was not, for the statement of his
to be the original, for the statement of his
the contrary, in the fact, when the critics as
then, which is the fact, when the critics as

May 12, 1807

INTRODUCTORY LINES.

.....

The following lines are introductory to a volume of Poems drawn from obscurity by the same painful necessity which induced the publication of "LETTERS FROM THE MOUNTAINS;" they allude to the same characters and circumstances, which the Letters delineate, and may therefore very properly introduce this edition of them.

.....

GO, artless records of a life obscure,
Memorials dear of loves and friendships past,
Of blameless minds from strife and envy pure,
Go, scatter'd by Affliction's bitter blast,
And tell the proud, the busy, and the gay,
How rural peace consumes the quiet day.

Oh ye, whom sad remembrance loves to trace,
Look down complacent from your seats above,
Regard with soft compassion's melting grace,
The simple offering of surviving love :
For while I fondly think you hover near,
Your whisper'd melody I seem to hear.

Ye dear companions in life's thorny way,
Who see your modest virtues here display'd,
 Forgive, for well you know the unstudied lay,
Was only meant to soothe the lonely shade.
But when the rude thorn wounds the songster's breast,
The lengthen'd strains of woe betray her secret nest.

LETTERS

FROM

THE MOUNTAINS.

LETTER I.

TO MISS EWING, OF GLASGOW.*

Oban,† April 30, 1773.

I HAD it not in my power to fulfil my promise at Inverary ; however, I have taken the first opportunity of troubling you with the recital of my trifling adventures, if such they may be called. After I parted with you, I was too much engrossed by thinking of the dear friends I had left at Dumbarton, to make many observations. How good it was in your aunt to treat you and Harriett‡ with this excursion, which lingered out

.....
* Now Mrs. Smith, of Jordan-Hill ; the early and faithful Friend of the Author of these Letters.

† Oban is now become a large and flourishing village ; it is the capital of Lorn, in Argyleshire.

‡ Henrietta Reid was a very amiable and deserving young creature, connected by marriage with Miss Ewing ; and by the more endeared intimacy both with her and the Author. This triple cord was never slackened by difference or distance of situation, but continued unbroken till the conclusion of that excellent person's life.

the painful parting hour so much longer. Alas it is a bleak prospect for a poor traveller, scarce seventeen, to go she knows not where, to do she knows not what, and live with she knows not whom. But, I carry my affections and my hopes with me. We shall meet again, and that as people do in heaven, with increased love and knowledge.

When I began to recover my spirits, and look about me, I was greatly pleased with the romantically variegated banks of Loch Lomond. Luss, with all its evergreens reflected in the purest of mirrors, enchants me ; there is a peaceful gloom about it that reminds me of what I used to feel, when musing between the Fir Park and the Bishop's Castle at the cathedral. I believe one great reason of my preference of you and our dear H. above every body, was, that you seemed to feel and think as I did of that favourite place. I can always get people to laugh with me, and I like to laugh too, at times ; but the difficult thing is to get one " soft, modest, melancholy female fair," that will be grave with me, and enter into my serious and solemn reflections, when I have them.

I think, if there was such a thing allowable, or what is the same thing, fashionable, a nunnery (a protestant one, remember) might be very agreeably situated here. What would you think of such a scheme ? Do not mistake me ; I would not altogether intend this for a place of penance and mortification, but rather as an asylum from the

levity and dissipation of the age ; where we might, uninfluenced by fashion, and undisturbed by pride and all the malignant passions that distract the giddy multitude, enjoy the tranquil pleasures of a rural retirement. There, too, we might cultivate friendships, which might rest on the basis of reason, not only through time, but through eternity.

I think I see you smile, and hear you compare me to the fox in the fable ; while from this solitude I rail at the lost pleasures of the dear town. I arrived here last night at eleven, after a tedious journey, in a very rainy day, through the *Mona Lia*,* or grey mountain, an endless moor, without any road, except a small foot-path, through which our guide conducted the horses with difficulty. The height of the mountain is prodigious. Crossing it, we were enveloped in the very region of storms and clouds. A small dreary lake, or abrupt grey crag, was the only variety which interrupted a scene, enough to fill any susceptible mind with awe and horror. I am now sitting, in the same rainy weather, in a house on the very edge of a sea, sprinkled with numberless islands. But I mean to give you an account rather of myself than of the country, when the fatigue and depression produced by yesterday's awful journey are over. I refer you to Harriet for an account of the delight with which I beheld Inverary. I

* The *Mona Lia* is a long dreary mountain, without any road but the path of cattle, which one crosses to go the direct road from Inverary to Oban.

don't know whether I am most dazzled with the duke's house, which has all the antique grandeur of a Gothic castle, without its dismal gloom and petty incumbrances, or with the gaiety and frankness of the people. But my fancy was most of all struck with the great beeches on the lawn, and the beautiful crescent which the smooth sandy shore makes round the bay on which the town stands. I am fallen in love too, deeply, hopelessly, in love, with the old gentleman;* so would you, if you were here; he is so lively, well bred, and intelligent; your commercial beaux would appear clowns, and your military ones coxcombs, compared to him. Pity he is about seventy, and has been thrice married. Mary looks very pretty, is very busy, and very much a housewife; she sends kind wishes to your sister, whom she likes almost as well as I like you.

Farewell, affectionately,

ANNE MAC V.

.....
 * Collector Macvicar, of Oban, distantly related to the Author, whose daughter Mary had the year before resided for some time with her family.

LETTER II.

TO MISS HARRIET REID, OF GLASGOW.

Inverary, April 28, 1773.

MY dearest H. I have been seriously thinking all the way to Luss, how little we know ourselves, and what odd beings we are. We left Balclutha* so mournful, "thin darkness covered our beauty, and we looked forth from our hill, like half seen stars, through the rainy clouds of night. The sigh of the manly youths awaited our departure, and we went away, very sad indeed." I am sure if St. Mungo's spire were capable of gratitude, it owes me some, for the many sad looks I cast back at it. I shall ever love my dear native Balclutha, not only for what I enjoyed, but for what I suffered in it. What I have suffered was the common lot of humanity ; what I have enjoyed was much more, for who ever had such friends as mine ? But now to our recollections. Who would have supposed, when we were at Dumbar-ton, that ever we should have dried our eyes ? Yet when we met in the great room, when the sea-born swains from Greenock joined us, when "the flame rose from the burning oak," we rose to serene, thence to cheerful, and had we not been forced to part so soon, we might have got up to

.....

* Glasgow.

hilarity. Then, when the great struggle came, and we did really part, I thought my heart would break ; and your last words sounded in my ears like a knell ; and I thought I should not smile this whole summer. I read the folded paper James Hall gave me to amuse me when I stepped into the carriage, about which you were so curious ; it related to real events, and was

“ So sad, so tender, and so true.”

’Twas from a young man of merit and parts ; who, by a love marriage, had, alas ! condemned himself to perpetual poverty. He had gone to scramble among the wealth of England for a subsistence. Why should I tell of his sorrows and disappointments ? Finally, my sister, he wrote this letter to a friend (probably James Hall himself) under those impressions which approaching death inspired. That princely knight errant, Francis the First, wrote to his mother from the field of a lost battle : “ Madam, all is lost but honour ;” good, but this is better still. “ The result is, all is lost, but a sure confidence in the Divine mercy.” And what else can a poor finite creature hold to, when the world and all that is dear and lovely in it, fades from his sight ? It was a most affecting letter : “ I wept abundant, and I wept aloud.” Yet, alas ! I fear they were not such generous tears as you might suppose. If I had not been so very sorry myself, I should not have been so easily melted. Well, now I was very sure I would not smile this summer, nor yet

read any book but the Bible and the Night Thoughts;* even the Odyssey was to be rejected. And thus I travelled on, so serious, and so sad. I was got far beyond moralizing; and then came on such small, soft, melancholy rain, and Ben Lomond's great head was wrapt in such a veil of thick clouds, that the nearer we drew, the less we saw of it. And as to my three friends, they shewed as much sense and feeling as Job's did, at first, whose silence, on an occasion which common minds would have seized to say common things, I always admired. In short the whole party seemed lost in meditation, till the sight of Loch Lomond roused us. What a happy faculty is an active imagination to combat the evils of sickly sensibility! I past over all the beautiful groves and cornfields that adorn the lower side, for I had seen such things before, and they brought images of happiness and tranquillity which my mind could not relish in its depressed state. But the solemn and melancholy grandeur of the lofty dark mountains, and abrupt rocks tufted with heath and juniper, that rose on the other side of the lake, and seemed to close its upper end, arrested my attention at once. I peopled their narrow and gloomy glens with those vindictive clans, that used to make such fatal incursions of old. I thought I saw Bruce and his

.....

* The Night Thoughts, and the Odyssey, were favourite studies among these friends, to which they were wont to make many serious and playful allusions.

faithful few ascending them, in his forced flight from Bute. A train of departed heroes seemed to pass on their clouds in long review, and, do but guess who closed the procession; no other than the notorious Rob Roy,* riding up the Loch side with the lady he forced away, and the "twenty men in order," who make such a figure in the ballad. My mother knew the family, and tells the whole history of the transaction. The lady, it would appear, was too delicate a subject for such a rough adventure, for she died of grief very soon after. I saw M. M.'s dwelling beneath romantick cliffs, and by a roaring stream, but I was not near enough to trace her stately steps. I made a happy transition from Rob Roy, to think of her, and her good books, and her cheerful piety: such an example to us all. Pray tell her I will never forget her.

All this brought us to Luss, which I am too lazy to describe twice; so must refer you to Bell. But I will tell you how I took a pensive walk to admire Inchmarron,† and the setting sun, while dinner was preparing. There "I chewed the food of sweet and bitter fancy," and felt some of

.....
 * Rob Roy Macgregor, the leader of a train of banditti; the last person in Scotland who carried off an heiress forcibly.

† Inchmarron is a beautiful island in Loch Lomond, three miles long, narrow and woody. It serves as a park for deer, and is the more interesting from being chosen sometimes as a retreat for harmless maniacs, who roam at large, and lodge with the Forester.

those painful twitches, or spasms (are they not ?) in my breast, that remind one how much the soul is superior to the frame that is thus influenced by it. Dinner brought us together, conversation grew insensibly cheerful; our Greenock friend amused us with amphibious humour, such as all the west coast abounds in; and before tea, your friend, who was not to relax a muscle this year, more than half smiled, and by supper time laughed outright. But truly might I say, that, "in the midst of laughter the heart is sad." Give me credit for my honesty, imitate my sincerity, and tell me when *you* laughed first. In the mean time I will tell you something to laugh at: My "three friends" being engaged in a long discourse, replete with Argyleshire genealogy, I was for a while quite abstracted; my Ossianick mania returned with double force; where every blast seemed to touch a viewless harp; and every passing cloud, brightened with the beams of the moon, appeared to my mind's eye a vehicle for the shades of the lovely and the brave, that live in the songs of other times. How softly sweet, how sadly plaintive, were the strains that now arrested my attention! from the dark caverns of the kitchen they proceeded, and, through the loose disjointed floor of our apartment they

"Rose like a stream of rich-distill'd perfumes."

This musick was both vocal and instrumental; but no such voice, no such instrument, had I ever heard. Could I sit still when curiosity was

so powerfully excited? Believe I did not, but, stealing down on tiptoe, beheld a great dark-browed highlander, sitting double over the fire, and playing "Macgrigor na Ruara," on two trumps* at once, while a nymph, half hidden amongst her heavy locks, was pacing backwards, turning a great wheel, and keeping time with voice and steps to his mournful tones. I retired, not a little disconcerted, and dreamt all night of you and Malvina by turns. Spring appears here but in early infancy. Yet how can I tell you how mildly beautiful the sun arose over the distant hills of Morven; or, with what secret veneration I traced the footsteps of my fathers along their blue gleaming lakes, or through their narrow vales. I saw, in the course of this morning's ride, Glenfalach, in a secret nook at the end of Lock Long, I think it is called; a name signifying the hidden vale, and hidden it certainly is. One would think it a sad exile to live in one of these recesses; yet, by what I can gather from the conversation of our friends, people somehow contrive to be both gay and busy here.

We drew near Lochaw, and caught a glimpse

.....

* Jews Harps.—"Macgrigor na Ruara," a beautiful plaintive tune, very popular in the Highlands. The mourner, in a pathetick and very peculiar strain of poetry, laments the slaughter of an outlaw, who appears to have been a Grant, and rightful possessor of Glenlyon. A very close translation of this interesting poem is given, by the Author of these letters, in the 4th vol. of Mr. Thomson's Scottish Musick.

of Barabreak, familiar to me as the often-described abode of my ancestors. Here we had a long detail of their simple manner of life, their humble virtues, and the affectionate confidence that subsisted between them and their copartners in the same possession. My father delighted to shew us the stream where he first caught a trout, and the little island which had been the object of his first excursion in search of nuts and raspberries ; I listened with delight to tales of other times, told with so much animation ; I felt as proud of the genuine worth, and unstained probity of my ancestors, as if they had been all that the world admires and envies, and only wished that I might not prove unworthy of them. I have already forgotten the name of the place we breakfasted at ; but there our fellow-traveller, or attendant rather, forsook us ; and there we picked up an original of quite another kind. The carriage was detained while one of the horses was shod, and I took that opportunity of gathering some of the freshest primroses I had ever seen, from the roots of a weeping birch, that actually “ wept odorous dew ” upon me, as I sheltered under its drooping branches. How do I love these artless bowers, and how much I wish to have you with me here, to tell you things that no other mortal would understand or care for. My walk was stopped by a stream, whose descent into the lake was covered by thick shades of alder and hazle, that reminded me of the creek where Ulysses went on shore in Phæ-

acia, and then I wished I had my Odyssey out of the chaise. But, alas ! no Odyssey was to be had. Then I was called to breakfast, in an upper room, the floor of which was much worse than that at Luss ; and indeed pervious to every sound. We had taken possession of the only tolerable room, and a newly-arrived traveller was heard growling for his breakfast below. He did not swear, but was so fretful and querulous ; so displeased with every thing that was given or said to him, and his manner of growling too was so amusing, he shewed so much ingenuity in discovering faults in every thing, that I burst out a laughing, and said we were certainly haunted by the ghost of Smelfungus, of whom Sterne gives such an amusing account. By the by, we had just that morning passed, "*with reverence due*," the monument of the original Smelfungus, which rises near his native spot, beside his favourite lake, which he delights to describe in Humphrey Clinker. Tea was prepared, but still thunder muttered hoarse below.

My father, inquiring about the stranger, and, finding he was a gentleman's son of the country, very good-naturedly sent him an invitation to breakfast ; for he concluded the house (a very poor one) could not furnish two breakfasts, with their apparatus (of equal elegance) and that this occasioned the ill humour by which we were incommoded. He was a student, travelling home from college ; he left all his irritability below, and

came up with an air so manly, well-bred, and accommodating, that had we not received some previous intelligence of his character through the floor, we should have thought highly of him; yet, through the strong lines of a marked and sensible countenance, the scowl of discontent was but too obvious. I, who for my part detest every mode of selfish luxury, could not endure to see a native highlander make his good humour dependent on a good breakfast, and was moreover disgusted by certain learned strictures* on new-laid eggs, which I am sure made no part of his college acquisitions. Then his appearance was so manly, that this puppyism was doubly provoking. However he sweetened by degrees into an agreeable and intelligent fellow-traveller. But, O! not a single spark of enthusiasm! Ossian himself was never blinder, than he is to the soul-moving beauties of that bard.

Why, after tiring you and myself with such a detail, should I tell you of the horrors of Glen-croe, through which we travelled in a dismal rainy day? In one particular, I dare say, I agreed with the stranger, for I really thought dinner the most interesting event of this day's journey, not

.....

* Among the peculiarities of highland manners is an avowed contempt for the luxuries of the table. A highland hunter will eat with a keen appetite and sufficient discrimination. But were he to stop in any pursuit, because it was meal time, to growl over a bad dinner, or visibly exult over a good one, the manly dignity of his character would be considered as fallen for ever.

merely as a repast, but the manner of it was so novel. There was a little inn, thatched, and humbler than any of the former ; we came very cold to it ; we found a well-swept clay floor, and an enlivening blaze of peats and brushwood, two windows looking out upon the loch we were to cross, and a primitive old couple, whose fresh complexion made you wonder at their silver hairs. All the apparatus of fishing and hunting were suspended in the roof ; I thought myself in Ithaca, though Homer does not speak of peats or trout, and far less of grouse. The people shewed an alacrity in welcoming us, and a concern about our being wet and cold, that could not have been assumed. I never took such a sudden liking to people so far out of my own way. I suppose we are charmed with cheerfulness and sensibility in old people, because we don't expect it ; and with unservile courtesies in the lower class, for the same reason. " How populous, how vital is the grave ;" says your favourite Young : " how populous, how vital are the glens !" I should be tempted to say here : but after the " stupendous solitude," through which we had just passed, the blazing hearth and kindly host had peculiar attractions.

Shall I tell you of our dinner ? Never before did I blot paper with such a detail ; but it is instructive to know how cheaply we may be pleased. On a clean table of two fir deals we had as clean a cloth ; trout new from the lake, eggs fresh as our student's heart could wish ;

kiftered salmon, fine new-made butter and barley-cakes, which we preferred to the loaf we had brought with us. Smelfungus began to mutter about the cookery of our trouts ; I pronounced them very well drest, out of pure spite ; for, by this time, I could not endure him, from the pains he took to mortify the good people, and to shew us he had been used to lodge and dine better. I feasted, and was quite entranced, thinking how you would enjoy all that I enjoyed. Dear Harriet, how my heart longs for you, when I think how yours is made to share all my wild pleasures !

The boat was crossing with other passengers over the ferry, which is very wide. We were forced to wait its arrival two hours ; to me very short ones ; one of them I have given to you, for I could never tell you all this when the warm feeling of the minute had worn off. I have kept my promise, of being minute, most religiously : there is merit in it.

For you I have forsaken Smelfungus, who is yonder walking on the Loch side, in all the surly dignity of displeasure. I am going to tea, and will put him in good humour, with questions about his college. What a pleasant tea-drinking ! the old man knew all my father's uncles, and the good woman was so pleased with my interest in her household economy ! It produced a venison ham, sacred to favourites, and every other good thing she had ; every one was pleased, and Smelfungus himself became,

“As mild and patient as the female dove,
When first her golden couplets are disclos’d.”

And here I conclude this long letter to begin another at Inverary. Innocent, beloved, and amiable, what more can I wish you, that will not risk a share of your happiness ?

Adieu, beloved !

LETTER III.

TO MISS REID, GLASGOW.

Inverary, April 29, 1773.

IF such a snarler as Smelfungus is so undeservedly happy as to have an Harriet to care for every thing he does, and think his rambling letters interesting, I fancy he is now pouring out to that favoured fair one a doleful complaint of those “vapours, and clouds, and storms,” which only exalted me to “solemn thought.” He indeed has a better title to call them “kindred glooms,” yet he does not seem very fond of these aërial relations. He and I are a complete contrast ; he has nothing of a highlander but by his birth ; now that is the precise and only circumstance wanting to make me a complete one. Such a day as we had after crossing the ferry ! such torrents ! Our carriage stood us in good stead, when we left the boat, in which indeed we got completely wet. But, alas ! for the unshel-

tered head of Smelfungus, and for the new hat he was so careful of. Wet and weary, late and dreary, we arrived. And yet I was not depressed. O that I could share with you the musings that absorbed my whole soul this evening. They pertained not to the earth ; nor any of its present inhabitants. There are some solemn hours when the wings of the soul are expanded to pursue the flight of the departed. When, balanced betwixt hope and fear, we hover over the abyss we are forbidden to explore, and anticipate the hour when the " graves shall give up their dead." Did you not tell me to write my thoughts just as they occurred ? How else should we converse in absence ? how keep the flame that warms my heart alive ? Believe me, I carry the same sentiments and recollections with me here, that used to be my companions at the Fir Park, or the Bogton Linn, to which latter present my respects, when you trace my old haunts. The approach to this city of the mountains was so veiled in mist, that I could only admire, through watery moon-beams, the semi circular sweep which the beach forms round the lake ; but I shall be here all day to-morrow, and tell you all that pleases me. I leave to Smelfungus to chronicle complaints ; if he felt as acutely as I do, he would have no pleasure in recording his painful feelings, which is to suffer them twice.

Five in the Morning.

What a long sweet oblivion of sorrow and fatigue have I had since nine last night ! After discharging superior duties, I am greatly tempted to worship the sun ; his first appearance from the sea was so overpowering after his long absence. There he is, " round as the shield of my fathers ;" teaching the mountains to rejoice, and the waves to roll in light. " Whence are thy beams, O Sun ?" I am not mad, most *gentle* Harriet, though you may think I do not quite speak the words of truth and soberness. But consider it is the spring of day, of life, and of the year, and indulge me in rejoicing a little, after I have mourned so much and so truly. How could I exist, feeling sorrow so poignantly, if the fair face of nature had not peculiar charms, endless sources of delight for me : Though my sorrows should be multiplied, as very likely they may, I shall have consolations peculiarly my own, that, like Milton's sweet musick,

" Will breathe

Above, about, and underneath."

How literal this truth is, the dulcet sounds that stole through the floor at Luss may testify. A little dress, a little Odyssey, a little breakfast, and then — I shall behold the faces of my kindred.— I have seen them ; and here they come in succession. - - - Now, I trust, you are tired of characters, and may come willingly down to still life. Last summer you heard half a dozen ample de-

scriptions of Inverary ; this summer, it is very likely, you may have as many more ; and that from people not so subject to the digressive infirmity as your friend. Depend upon these matter-of-fact people for an account of this princely edifice, and its dependencies ; I shall merely tell you of particulars that struck me most forcibly ; premising that this castle, as they call it here, is not finished within. First, then, the Gothick grandeur of the hall, open to the very top, and lighted by a cupola, delighted me ; 'tis like a receptacle for the train of a mighty chieftain, and quite in unison with the boldness of the neighbouring scenery. There is a kind of gallery or corridor carried round this hall, from which you enter the upper rooms ; the doors of these you see all in one view, as you stand in the hall. 'Tis not like any thing you ever saw before ; yet I am sure you would admire it. We were suddenly ushered into a beautiful summer parlour, which had a sashed door that opened into a beautiful lawn. Will you believe me, when I tell you, that I thought, for a moment, I was in the open fields, surrounded by people engaged in rural sports, the scene was so lively, and rushed so suddenly on me. The first thing that awoke me to the knowledge of what I was about, was the different style of the countenances from those I was accustomed to see. What should this be but a room hung with Gobelins' tapestry, whose magical perfection of resemblance made you think the hay-makers and

children lived and moved. And for the trees, I am sure your nephew Francis would have tried to climb them. I said, reluctantly, "Adieu, ye woods!" And yet, after all, I am not sure I should like such a room, unless merely to wonder and gaze at. Can it be the love of truth in the mind, that recoils at a very near deception? Wax figures, and very excellent trees in tapestry, make me something like Young's monkies, who, "at a mirror stand amazed;" "they fail to find what they so plainly see." I did not "peep and chatter," but my wonder felt something like disappointment. I was disappointed too in seeing so few pictures. I should like to find portraits in this region of beauty, the lord and lady of which could only have been parallels to each other.

I am told their children excel even the Hamilton family. So they should, having a double claim; their father having been a model of manly grace in his day, though now a little jaundiced with stomach complaints. And here I could find in my heart to stop and rail at the world, which, you know, I bear no great good will to. One hears so little about him, he is so quietly passed over to make room for dashers, and boasters, and fighters, and talkers. *He* does not wish to be talked of, 'tis certain; but then I would not have them quite so complaisant as to give him all his will in this particular. Seek for a great man's true and solid praise at his own door, among his tenants and neighbours; and let it be a material

part of his praise, that he has neighbours, that is to say, that he lives at home among them. In this particular, the Duke is unrivalled and alone. Every mouth here will tell you of some of these "quiet waters, soft and slow," that steal silently on, carrying bounty, and beneficence, into all the corners of obscurity. Don't be tired, now ; for I have a whole volume to write of this good Duke's worth, and wisdom, which improves and blesses the whole country ; but I can no more

"Let him still the secret joy partake,
To follow virtue, ev'n for virtue's sake."

Yet, I hope, when this modest and amiable benefactor of mankind sleeps with his fathers,* and when the tenants have ceased to say,

"He is the best of countrymen ;"

(a word equivalent to patriot) some powerful voice shall say with effect,

"Rise, Muses, rise, add all your tuneful breath,
Such must not sleep in darkness and in death."

For, as much as I was bent on dying last winter, I may still hear these notes :

"Sweet to the world, and grateful to the skies."

You will say I am quite carried off ; but I feel the patriot passion strong myself, and am charmed when I find one actually doing all that I dream

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* That time is arrived ; for last year Scotland was deprived of this venerable Duke : who, independent of the rank he adorned, and the power he used for the best purposes, was beloved in life and lamented in death, as a worthy private character, and a genuine patriot.

of doing. The offices of this fabrick are magnificent for their purposes, and the roads leading to them wonders ; but what I greatly wonder at is, that they should place the offices at such a distance as to require such roads. I believe there is no danger of my ever living in a great house, and I am not sorry for it. There is such a stately absence of all comfort ; every thing that unsophisticated nature delights to cling to, is put so far away ; and the owner seems somehow alone in the middle of his works, like Nebuchadnezzar, saying, " Behold now this great Babylon which I have made." I should be very sorry to have my poor houyhnhams where I could neither hear them neigh, nor see them shake their necks, clothed with thunder. Suppose me above looking at hens and ducks, I should not like to have my stately peacocks, and majestick swans, swimming and sweeping a mile off. The gardens, too, must keep their distance. What have poor Flora and Pomona done, to deserve banishment ? As for the sheltering Dryads of antiquity, they are all marched off, for no reason that I can think of, but their being grown old maids, and the bleak blasts seem invited in their stead. I wonder whether people are to live longer in these temples of Eolus, than they did in the sheltered " halls of other days," where every thing around them was animated and interesting. I wish you could but once see the moon shine on Loch Fyne, and the shadow of Duniquaich falling on the great house. Now, you

must observe, the bay forms a perfect crescent, the castle, surmounted by Dúniquaich aforesaid, and skirted at great distance by offices, adorns one end of the crescent ; on the very edge of the bay stands Inverary, a mean-looking yet cheerful and populous place, deriving a peculiar beauty from its situation. 'Tis one street facing the water ; and beyond it a fine road, surrounded by a beautiful lawn, sprinkled with prodigious beech-trees, sweeps from one horn of the crescent to the other. I hear, and, being no friend to alterations, am sorry to hear, that this ancient town is to be transported and removed to the other horn of the crescent, where the inn and custom-house now stand. This will augment the solitary grandeur of the house, by throwing every thing far from it. The duke, who does every thing well that he takes in hand, will, no doubt, raise finer buildings ; but they will only look like children's card-houses, as the present set appear like molehills. Nature here is so vast and grand, that the works of art diminish to nothing in her awful presence. I dare say, looking from Benleddi, the castle would appear attached to Dúniquaich, like Grildrig's box at the girdle of Glumdalclitch.

We spent the evening with the same relations we had seen in the forenoon. Our old friend, the Collector's sister, is a most singular evergreen ; indeed she resembles himself a good deal ; thin, lively, tall, erect, with a keen expressive eye, and a fresh youthful complexion, though much above

seventy. Awake and alive to every thing ; always amusing, occasionally facetious, and abounding in anecdote : she has seen many sorrows, and borne them firmly, to say the least. There were assembled at supper - - - - I like the kindness and frankness of these friends vastly.

A sister of Dr. M. whom you may remember with us last winter, is newly married to one of these cousins. She has been growing wise for half a century, without cooling in her benevolence in the region of celibacy. She was always a good creature, and a friend to all the friendless ; and has now an occupation well suited to such a disposition. I am sure he married her, beautiful and moneyless as she was, that she might be a kind stepmother. And so she is, and seems so pleased with having a family to rear. She puts me very much in mind of a hen with an alien brood of young ducks. If I were to marry at all, which is very unlikely, thinking on many subjects as I do, I could be easily reconciled to a ready-made family, supposing them docile and grateful. I can easily comprehend how one could adopt them to one's affections. Then think of being quit of their plague while they are mere vegetables ; and then become mere animals ; and think of the credit one should get for being kind to these ready-made innocents. And moreover, the strong hold such generosity would give you of your lord's affections. Now if there was any office that would insure one against paying

mother Eve's penalty, I think breeding ducks would be no bad speculation. But indeed you may depend upon it we shall never be so happy as we have been. No, never.

The Collector's horses are just arrived ; we must leave Inverary to-morrow, and it will rain ; and I am so sorry ; and I have not half seen it, nor taken leave of poor Smelfungus. I will take leave of you, however ; and, if I come alive to Oban, will rise at five every morning to write to you.

Good night, beloved !

LETTER IV.

TO MISS REID.

Oban, April 30, 1773.

HERE I am, but dreadfully tired ; tired of rain ; tired of riding ; tired of long moors, but, above all, of long descriptions. See my letter to Bell,* where you will find how I came through the Mona Lia. O, never was moor so long and so solitary !

You will say my active imagination might people the brown desert ; so it did, but it was with fleeting spectres, and half-seen visions, melting into grey mist. *A-propos* to our duck-

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* Page 15.

lings ; you can't think how my spirit was refreshed by a flock of wild ones, that took flight from a small lake in that same dreary moor. I saw, or thought I saw, two or three deer through the mist, and that did me a great deal of good. Still more, I was supported by a benevolent project for the reformation of some of our friends ; I mean such of them as do, or say, no great harm, but who so bewilder their brains and waste their time among endless mazes of ribands and lacc, and tattle and tales, and " pribbles and prabbles," as honest parson Evans calls them, that, I am convinced, some solitary pilgrimages over the brown desert might wean them from this endless trifling, and teach them first to think, and then, " on reason build resolve," which might be found " a column of true dignity," even in woman. But I will no longer bewilder you among my meditations. The general result, however, was, that we should be oftener alone. I am sure I have little merit to claim from superior reflection or culture. Could I have indulged myself in the society of others of my age, I should, most probably, have done as they did. Had I been educated like other people, I should not have felt the necessity of educating myself.

If, therefore, my thinking and reading have been of any advantage, they are merely the result of certain painful and discouraging privations. If others were secluded like me, or exiled, as I am about to be, from all that was wont to please,

they would be forced to seek resources within themselves. This too might be a cure for vanity. I can easily suppose recluses proud, but it is among frivolous society that people grow vain. We are proud of what we certainly possess ; but vanity only seeks credit for seeming, and is just as well satisfied to be admired for rouge as for native bloom. It lives in the breath of others, and dies when it is no longer seen.

Don't think I am so new-fangled, as to begin to rail at the town, which I have just quitted, out of fondness for a country which is so new to me, and which, very probably, I may not like. But I am so provoked at the tiresome sameness of treading one insignificant round for ever. Were it a week, a month, a season, that was to be consumed in impertinence and insignificance ; but all day long, and every day, and to grow old in it, and die without having lived to any considerable purpose ! People in the country may be abundantly silly and selfish, but the passion for despicable and corrupting novelties is not so constantly fed. When the heart is chastened by adversity, or softened by sorrow, the salutary impression is not too soon effaced. The mind is in a manner forced on the contemplation of nature ; and I don't know how any one can see one's Maker in his greatest works, without being the better and the wiser for it. Yet to those who are truly desirous of improvement, the town affords greater choice of society. That, and that alone,

I regret in leaving it. I will not be so cruel as to carry you back to the moor, but I will tell you how it terminated. We descended into low grounds, in view of the sea, about twilight, and there was my spirit exhilarated with the sight of Glenfeuchan. The sweet stream that winds by it, the green pastoral vale sheltered by an overhanging mountain, in which it lies, the birch grove, in which the house is embosomed, and, above all, the air of "animated peace," which it derived from the return of the cattle and the servants, at the evening hour; and, moreover, the idea of the warm welcome I should receive from that agreeable romp, Mary Campbell, whom you have seen with me last winter; all this pressed so forcibly on my mind, that I would have given any thing to stop here: but this indulgence was not permitted, so with a heavy heart, I went on, and did not reach Oban till eleven.

Are the cares of a household productive of the same alteration in manner that we have often observed to be the result of matrimony? Mary M——r and I were too unlike to be congenial; but kindred, and those who live together in a perpetual interchange of kindness, may love without assimilating, and even though their views and pursuits should be very different. That was precisely the case with M. and me, when she lived with us. Though she has little taste, no refinement, and not the smallest thirst for knowl-

edge, she is not heartless, has a good understanding, and a quick apprehension of the ludicrous. I am sure, too, she loves me as well as she does any one else, and so she ought ; indeed she seems to love me still, and is all kindness and attention ; yet there is a visible constraint about her. She is often absent, and does not enter into the spirit of raillery, or what she used to call fun. Who could ever think of Mary's being abstracted, and yet abstracted she certainly is. I wonder much how people should be so fond of marrying, when the cares of a household make such an alteration on a girl not sixteen. She manages surprisingly, and pays an attention to every thing, which I am sure I could not do, though I am older, and accounted more sedate. It is very encouraging to her to see how much her father is pleased with every thing she does. And I am so pleased with her father ; he is a delightful old man.* If his are the manners of the old Court, I wish I had lived a little earlier. He is not the least formal. Indeed, he has lived so much among military people, and has so much of their general knowledge, and general politeness, that his are rather the manners of an old officer. - - - - - He delights to talk of his "last friend," who I believe was an amiable woman, and lived happily with him, for the short time their union lasted ;

* Collector Macvicar was a polished, intelligent, and publick-spirited character, and was a great favourite of the late Duke of Argyle.

though the difference of age amounted to little less than fifty years. I must surely have told you the singular history of that marriage. The only fruit of it, a little girl not three years old, is a creature you could not see without loving. He doats upon her, and I do not wonder at it ; every look and motion of the dear little orphan charms one. She is pretty, too, though not remarkably ; but she shews sense and feeling that is incredible. The sweet creature follows me already. I never saw a child half so interesting. Good night ; I will tell you to-morrow what kind of place this is ; this day I have devoted to the people. Besides, it snows so hard, as to remind me of your favourite poem,

“ Oft for the prospects sprightly May should yield !
Rain-pouring clouds have darken’d all the air,
And snows untimely whiten’d o’er the field.”

LETTER V.

TO MISS REID.

Oban, May 2, 1773.

THE morning is clear and mild, and something like what May ought to be.

The Collector’s dwelling-house forms part of the custom-house ; it stands on the verge of this fine bay. The tide flows up to the door, but re-

tires half a mile back, and discovers a scene very new and amusing to me, who have never been at the sea-side, except in embarking and debarking. Vast stones, where the footing is difficult, mixed with gravel, shells, and sea-weed, compose the extensive beach, which the ebbing sea leaves naked. I propose indulging my delight in overcoming difficulties, and exploring odd places and odd things, by many a walk in pursuit of the retreating sea nymphs. For you must know 'tis settled I am to stay till June, when the Collector and Mary are to conduct me to Fort William, where my father will meet me. I am glad of it, I shall not be kept so busy, and have more society and amusement. Here is an excellent library, left the Collector by that ill-fated brother who was the patron of my father's orphan childhood. His fine talents, and finer feelings, served only to embitter misfortunes such as could not have happened to a common man. His morals were spotless, and he was not the victim of rashness and imprudence, as is often the case, with these "fine souls too felingly alive ;" nor was poverty among the number of those misfortunes which pursued, and at length overwhelmed him. His fate was very singular indeed ; he might have been said to die a martyr to wounded honour. Had he died when the wound was inflicted, his fate would have been comparatively mild ; but a man whose form, whose manners, whose mind, were distinguished, above all others, by peculiar elegance, to languish

in painful obscurity, branded by a set of miscreants with the disgrace of treachery, which his soul abhorred ! All his patriotick plans for the improvement of the country, all his plans of life, and hopes of happiness, blasted by a malignity too base and secret to be exposed, and too barbarous to be resisted ! When forced by the machinations of his arch enemy, Lord J.* to sell his company in the 42d, he tried to amuse himself by rural occupations in his native country ; for his mind was too deeply wounded to find solace in those literary pursuits, to which he had been formerly so much attached, and in which, if we may judge by his letters, he was so qualified to excel. A hypochondriack affection, which made life burthensome to him, and often tempted him to throw off the load, made him frequently change his abode, though well aware, that “ change of place was only change of pain.” Melancholy, solitude, and the corroding remembrance of an irremediable misfortune, soured the most gentle and benignant of mortals into absolute misanthropy. I am interrupted, and cannot detail the painful story of his death. It was a sad termination indeed, but not self-urged : such a man could not be so utterly forsaken. He has haunted me ever since I came here. I shall never open a book of his without a pang. What a transition, from the person I have

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 * Lord John Murray, who was himself misled by a designing sycophant, and afterwards prejudiced the Duke of Cumberland against this hard fated gentleman.

been describing, to those I have just left ! You must remember a good-natured, giddy, but very genteel looking youth, who was in town last winter, a relation of ours ; he is the heir of a very long ancestry, a very small patrimony, with abundance of *original sin* attached to it, and of two of the best old people in the world. Though these good people cared for nothing earthly but each other, and their children, and lived in as primitive and frugal a manner as Baucis and Philemon, they long struggled vainly with their incumbrances. At length they began to get above water, and actually built the shell of a house, to be finished by young hopeful (for a highland mansion is generally the work of two generations.) This consummation, so devoutly to be wished, was to take place when the said heir began to thrive in some lucrative profession, or by some wealthy match, to which it was supposed his fine figure and family pretensions might entitle him. He has, in the mean time, a younger but cleverer brother in the army.

But, mark the sequel. A very little, very pretty, and very thoughtless girl, the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman, came home from the boarding-school, as usual, very full of dress, vanity, and musick : she was scarce sixteen, quite childish looking, and in frocks. However, cousin and she met, and, in two or three days acquaintance, sung, and played, and romped, and trifled themselves into matrimony. No fortune

to compensate this rash act, what should the good old people do ? — Just brought them home with all the patience imaginable ; and here they are, and often I am told they come ; 'tis quite a second home ; their own is half a mile off. How I shall be teased ! yet conscience says I should like my kindred, and they are most obliging ; but I feel something revolting, when people love me dearly at first sight. I can't love others so, my mind shrinks from strangers. Then how should they like me at once ? I am sure our old friend must tire of the incursions of these nothing-doing people. I am vexed to see that Mary is fondly intimate with them. Say they are quite harmless, as I dare say they may be, they favour her own bent too much. Good night, I am very tired ; but you know my day, from five in the morning till midnight, admits of doing much to make me so.

LETTER VI.

TO MISS REID, GLASGOW.

Oban, May 3, 1773.

I WROTE letters of duty in the morning, walked out all the forenoon, except a short time I spent with the sweetest of children and her father ; and now I shall account to you for the remaining hours. After dinner we left our two old

gentlemen together, and set out for S—— : the walk S——ward is charming. It is a sweet place, sheltered by a small hill ; a brook, fringed with willows and alder, runs by it ; beautiful meadows lie below, and towering mountains rise opposite. I never saw a place of a more pastoral aspect. I love the good old people : there is something so artless, primitive, and benevolent about them. I think I could guess them, by their looks, to be what every one describes them. Do you know, the Highlanders resemble the French, in being poor with a better grace than other people. If they want certain luxuries or conveniences, they do not look embarrassed, or disconcerted, and make you feel awkward by paltry apologies, which you don't know how to answer ; they rather dismiss any sentiment of that kind by a kind of playful raillery, for which they seem to have a talent. Our visit, if not a pleasant, was at least a merry one. The moment tea was done, dancing began. Excellent dancers they are, and in musick of various kinds they certainly excel. The floor is not yet laid, but that was no impediment. People hereabouts when they have good ancestry, education, and manners, are so supported by the consciousness of those advantages, and the credit allowed for them, that they seem not the least disconcerted at the deficiency of the goods of fortune ; and I give them great credit for their spirit and contentment, though it should provoke the appellation of poor and proud, which vulgar mind

are so ready to apply to them. Is it not a blessed thing that there yet exists a place where poverty is respectable, and deprived of its sting ? O this incurable disease of wandering ! I will return to my description, which I broke off on the ebb shore. Behind the house, then, is an excellent, though as yet, infant, garden, for this is quite a new establishment ; a range of offices stretch along the shore on each side ; the king's wherry and other boats, and such vessels as may chance to arrive, lie a little westward, and animate the spot where the joint wisdom of the Duke and the Collector have projected a future village, the rudiments of which already begin to appear.* From this chosen spot, where a large brook discharges itself into the sea, a peaceful, long, green valley† opens from the shore, of which the Duke has given an advantageous lease to the Collector, who is a great favourite. The cottages lie in clusters on the sides of the sloping hills, or in sequestered nooks, below rocks interspersed with patches of earth, tufted with yellow broom, or mountain ash, which nod so wildly ! And the people have so much the air of loving and helping each other ! and their goats are such familiar, fanciful looking creatures ! I am so fond of the kids, that dance and frisk with so much humour and meaning, and cry so like children, I would fain have one of

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 * This village is now become a very flourishing one.

† Glenshealeach, or the Vale of Willows, is the name of this verdant and pastoral glen.

them follow me tame, and am sadly distressed when I must needs eat them. I think if ever I run wild on the rocks, which at times I feel much inclined to, I will not be a shepherdess, but a goatherdess. These creatures have more sense and spirit than heavy-headed sheep ; they differ just as highlanders do from plodding lowlanders. —To return once more. On the other side of the house, and within a small distance of it, rises a hill quite detached from all others, and as like a sugar-loaf, as if the resemblance had been designed by art. It is small, compared to the lofty heights that overlook it. The fine prospect seen from the house, is commanded to great advantage from this little eminence. I climb'd to the very summit, which we should call high, but it is nothing here. There I found a white scallop shell, a diminutive of those used at Fingal's feast. I was quite glad, thinking it a most orthodox shell, left by the deluge ; but was so laughed at—and very justly, when I think of it ; for it would, in that case, have mouldered to lime a thousand years ago. Well, I hope this will be a lesson against being positive and conceited. Good night ; I go to church to-morrow. Now I think of it, I will not go to sleep without finishing what I have so often begun. Of the fine views from this spot, I cannot enumerate the islands I see, nor the groups of fantastick dark blue mountains, rising in others, too distant for distinction. Just such a prospect, I dare say, Ulysses had from the heights of

his dear rocky Ithaca ; he looked on Zante and Cephalonia, as I do on Mull and Tiree. Some of these isles are inhabited by one gentleman, his family and a few tenants. What an undisturbed little kingdom, and how happy one could make every subject of it ! What an exile, what a prison, would such a sea-girt domain prove to some crowd-dependent people we know !

Mary is, and will be down stairs, getting flattery and comical sea stories, of which she has a great many, that are too much in the style of these inferior regions. Good night again.

LETTER VII.

TO MISS REID.

Oban, May 5, 1773.

KILMORE, where we heard sermon, is four miles off, at least, being three of highland computation. It is by no means a Jewish sabbath that is kept here ; it would be bold even to call it strictly a Christian one ; be that as it may, it is a very cheerful one. We set out on horseback in a shower of snow, which people here mind no more than hair-powder. It hinders nothing. We picked up the young couple at S. whose unmeaning mirth made me grave, and set me on pondering. Yet, when I observed the perpetual flow of

spirits that buoys up the emptiness of—I revered the goodness of Providence in making people happy at so small an expense of intellect. I am not sure but their lot would be pre-eminent, were they all as innocent as my good-natured cousin. But their imbecility makes them tools to the wicked and designing; so that I believe 'tis as well to have some reflection, after all. This was an odd old church, almost ruinous. But when the preacher came in,* he roused all my attention. I never beheld a countenance so keenly expressive, nor such dark piercing eyes: he is very like his sister, F. M.,† and resembles her in a superior musical genius, being a distinguished composer, as well as performer, on the violin. When I began to look about, the dresses and countenances of the people presented new matter of speculation. This is certainly a fine country to grow old in; I could not spare a look to the young people, so much was I engrossed in contemplating their grandmothers. They preserve the form of dress worn some hundred years ago. Stately, erect, and self-satisfied, without a trace of the languor or coldness of age, they march up the area, with gaudy coloured plaids fastened about their breasts with a silver broach, like the full moon in size and shape. They have a peculiar

* The Rev. Peter Macdonald, Minister of Kilmore, still living; distinguished for musical talents.

† Flora Macdonald.

lively blue eye, and a fair fresh complexion. Round their heads is tied the very plain kerchief Mrs. Page alludes to, when Falstaff tells her how well she would become a *Venetian tire* ; and on each cheek depends a silver lock, which is always cherished and considered, not improperly, as a kind of decoration. These you must observe were the common people ; the old *ladies* were habited in the costume of the year one. I was trying to account for the expression in the countenances of these cheerful ancients (many above fourscore) while the pastor with vehement animation was holding forth in the native tongue. Now here is the result : people who are for ever consecrating the memory of the departed, and hold the virtues, nay, the faults of their ancestors, in such blind veneration, see much to love and revere in their parents, that others never think of. They accumulate on these patriarchs all the virtues of their progenitors, and think the united splendour reflects a lustre on themselves. The old people, treated with unvaried tenderness and veneration, feel no diminution of their consequence, no chill in their affections. Strangers to neglect, they are also strangers to suspicion. The young readily give to old age that cordial, by which they hope to be supported when their own almond trees begin to blossom. But fine people do not seem ever to think they shall be old. Now in their way, I should love my father not merely as such, but because he was the son of the wise and pious Don-

ald, whose memory the whole parish of Craignish venerates, and the grandson of the gallant Archibald, who was the tallest man in the district, who could throw the *putting* stone farther than any Campbell living, and never held a Christmas without a deer of his own killing, four Fingalian greyhounds at his fire-side, and sixteen kinsmen sharing his feast. Shall I not be proud of a father, the son of such fathers, of whose fame he is the living record? Now, what is my case is every other highlander's; for we all contrive to be wonderfully happy in our ancestry; and by this means, the sages here get a great deal of reverence and attention, not usually paid to the struldbruggs of other countries. Observe, moreover, that they serve for song books, and circulating libraries; so faithfully do they preserve, and so accurately detail, "the tales of the times of old" and the songs of the bards, that now strike the viewless harp on wandering clouds. All this, with their constant cheerfulness, make them the delight of the *very young*, in the happy period of wonder and simplicity; and finding themselves so, prevents their being peevish, or querulous. Ossian was never more mistaken than when he said, "Age is dark and unlovely;" here it appears "like the setting moon on the western wave," and we bless the brightness of its departure. I was waked out of the pleasing reverie which the sight of so many fine ancients inspired, by the beadles coming to the seat to ask if I had

Gaelick, because if I had not, there was to be an English discourse. Judge of my self-importance, in having a sermon preached for my very self. Poor souls ! will you ever compare yourselves to me again ? Meg M.*, when she was composing her meditation upon “ Worm Jacob, threshing the Mountains,” had not a higher idea of the consequence of her single, sinful, soul. A new and very amusing scene opened, when service was over : we were ushered into a kind of publick house, where it seems all the genteel part of the congregation (and very genteel some of them were) usually meet, converse, and take refreshment, while their horses are preparing, &c. M. Glenfenchau and I met joyfully. I recognized her new blush-coloured lustring, as soon as I went into church, but at such exhibitions I no longer wonder. The *Kirk* here, is literally accounted a publick place, and frequented from very different motives. People *not singularly pious*, cross ferries, and ride great distances in bad weather, not solely, I fear, to hear the glad tidings in church, but to meet friends in this good-humoured, kindly way, after sermon, who can tell them all about their eighteenth cousins in India and America. The conversation is in a style so different from what you are used to—

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* Meg Merrison, a conceited bigot in low life, who used to compose and sell what she called her *Meditations*, one of which had the above title.

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All this is very animated, and I contrive to be much interested. There is little scandal ; for scandal is the dregs and sediment of conversation, after better things have been discussed ; and we talk so much of the dead, that the living escape. Your belles and beaux would not relish this, for there is no chance of being admired by the dead. I am resolved for my part, to die in the Highlands, that I may avoid the sudden oblivion which swallows up the departed among polished people, who disguise selfishness under the pretence of not being able to endure to have their fine feelings disturbed with the mention of the dead.

Honest *Donald* feels no such repugnance, but calls up the joy of grief in tender meditation ; cherishes the memory of his fathers, “ and walks in the light of their renown.”

“ Why should I speak of General Chumley,
And Mr. Muster-master Gumley ?”

Vide Bathos.

Why should I introduce you to the cynosure of the assembly, the old major, with his tartan coat, his large silver buttons, worn in Montrose’s wars by his grandfather, and his redundant silver locks adorning a countenance, the picture of health and benignity ? Nor will you care a farthing for his three thin upright sisters, though they are, amidst their oddity, very like mountain gentlewomen ; nor for his nine cousins, tasteless thing that you

are. Among this singular groupe, were some very well bred, fashionable looking people, who had been abroad in the world, without being spoiled by it, and treated their antiquated rustick relations with a respect and kindness which was both amiable and exemplary. If I were to stay and frequent this church a twelvemonth, hearing and retaining as I generally do, I doubt not that I might be qualified to compile the heraldry of Lorn, so skilled should I become in its antiquities.

The sun shone on our social repast, but when we set out, Eolus did not perform the task Thomson assigns him in the opening of spring ; instead of "calling off his ruffian blasts," he let them loose in great fury, and the demolition of my new hat awakened my remorse for making so merry with poor Smelfungus's misfortune of the same kind. Blinded with snow, and in instant danger of "mounting the whirlwind's wing," we were accosted by a most respectable looking gentleman, who brought us into his house, which seemed the chosen residence of comfort ;—so they told me, for I could look at nothing but the mistress of the mansion, she had been so very handsome, and was still so very engaging : her countenance had so much soul in it, her person and demeanour were so graceful, and her manner so graciously kind. The Collector says, she is all her appearance promises ; I felt sorry when I thought I might never see her again. After all,

"What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba ?"

My friends laughed and talked louder than the storm, all the way home ; I was lost in lofty meditation, and, to own the truth, writing this letter in idea ; and then I was so glad to find myself at this fireside, with the sweet little girl in my arms.

I am going to bid good night to the moon ; the storm is over, the undulating waters are like living light, while the same beams repose so sweetly on the shadowy sides of far-seen mountains, that arise in distant isles.

“ — in such a night,
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea bank, and wav'd her love
To come again to Carthage.”

Ungrateful cur that he was. Adieu ! may you never wave a willow, or spend a good day as idly as I have done this. It is past midnight, and remorse is preying on me. Adieu ! again, my dearest.

LETTER VIII.

TO MISS REED.

Oban, May, 1773.

NOW, my dear Harriet, I have commenced a bad custom both to you and myself ! I write so minutely, that when I settle and have

something else to do, I must needs be concise, and then you will think me careless; but you must not, for my manner of writing to you is so like our old wandering chit-chat, that I fly to it as Lizzy does to her snuff-box, and this so often, that I neglect those I ought to like and attend to, and would attend to, if I did not feel as if I had you always in a corner to run to. I will not write these two days, unless a little matter of fact before breakfast, and a gossiping whisper at bed-time. My taste for solitary amusement, and indifference to the volatile chit-chat of some people, begin to excite much observation. Shake off the imputation as we please, every one has their own mode of selfishness, and I feel mine to be that of running away to my solitary pleasures. I repent, will mortify myself, and

“Do penance in gay young company.”

Midnight.

I am reformed, and amended, but cannot fatigue myself or you with the description of this day; you will find it in Thomson.

“Deceitful, vain, and void, passes the day.”

Why should I speak with peevishness, of good-humoured, harmless people, who show a wish to please me? Why am I not pleased with trifles, when the best of us are doomed to pass great part of our lives in a manner which our own reflections must call trifling; but then I should like to trifle in my own way. I could play half a day

with sweet little Anne, or even with a sportive kitten, or puppy : I could gather shells and sea-weed on the shore, or venture my neck for nests, which I would not plunder after finding them; nay, I could talk nonsense as we used to do, and laugh heartily at vagaries of our own contriving. But their nonsense I can't for my life relish; they think it wit, and I can't accredit it as such. Then they think cunning wisdom, and mistake simplicity for folly. Very rural all this! Here is gossiping for you with a witness. Do not think that I indulge myself in the conceit of not caring for any body, unless they have the taste for reading, which great leisure and solitude, in a manner, forced upon me. But I would have people love truth and nature; I would have them look a little into the great book which their Maker has left open to every body. I would have the rising and setting sun, the blossoming trees and opening flowers, give them the same pleasure, which many taste, without knowing their alphabet. O! when, or where shall I see another Harriet, uncultured and untaught, yet awake to all that is grand or beautiful in nature, all that is excellent or desirable in knowledge—whose intuitive sense of what is delicate and proper, is worth volumes of instruction! The more I know of others, the more I regret you; and the best use I ever could make of the knowledge which I have accidentally acquired, would be to impress it on the fair tablet of your spotless mind. Good night, my dear; I

am neither very well nor very easy. I have got cold in these meadowy traverses. My father and mother go away to-morrow. Were it not for the dear old man, and his little girl, and his library, I would go too. Write to me here, and never mind incorrectness ; you will daily improve ; or, though you should not,

“Thou hast no faults, or I no faults can spy,

“Thou art all beauty, or all blindness I.”

LETTER IX.

TO MISS REID.

Fort William, May 12, 1773.

BE astonished, Oh ! Harriet, for here I am. Ask why I am here, and I can only tell you it was owing to the strangest caprice. Yet, so it is, and you know I do not use to be fickle. The day after I wrote to you, it was settled that my father and mother were to proceed in the king's wherry, “Mark that, Mary Jones.” Two o'clock was the hour fixed. Mary proposed a forenoon walk, I went reluctantly, on condition of not passing the boundary rivulet on the way to S. There she lingered with teasing perseverance ; hoping, no doubt, that some of our friends would appear. At length I would go, fearing my parents might go without seeing me. The first object that met

my eyes, crossing the hill, was his majesty's wherry going full sail up the Bay. I grew cold as lead; I felt the oddest sensation: surprise and remorse for being away, and a strange forlorn feeling I cannot express, stupified me for a few moments, and then my eyes filled and I was relieved. Yet I felt as if I were alone in the world, and cared for nothing. After dinner there came a sudden violent blast, with drift and squalls. The Collector retired to write, and I to the library.

Just as we all met at tea, lamenting the sad evening, there came an outcry from below, that the wherry was seen returning. I was so agitated—in short, the storm had driven them back, and I was seized with the strongest desire to go with them; I knew I should miss many pleasures I had promised myself, that, for instance, of seeing Kitty Macalman, whom I like better than any one I ever knew from this quarter; 'twas odds if I should get away till the end of summer; I had lost all influence over Mary's mind, and I saw clearly she was in hands I could not take her out of: so far from profiting by advice, I knew she would hate me for advising her: she might sink into vulgarity or folly, but why should I grieve myself with seeing what I could not mend? I knew the Collector would be sorry to part with me. I hope it was not cunning, but delicacy, that made me beg my mother to say that she had changed her mind, and would not leave me. How my heart pined for the sweet little girl! I should

have delighted to take her with me, and make a little sister of her.

We came off at five next morning, for then the tide made. Poor Mary was not so indifferent as I thought. After we had parted, while the boat was putting off, she sprung, as from a sudden impulse, on a great stone, and from thence to the boat again; she silently embraced me, with a tear on her cheek. If we never meet again I shall remember this as ominous, for Mary is unused to the melting mood. I thought she never looked so pretty: what a fine face hers would be with suitable expression!

The morning was clear, though cold; I enjoyed very much the views on each side, betwixt Mull and the coast, and saw the old castles of Dunolly and Dunstaffnage on rocks projecting into the sea, and many other places of old renown. Do you know, the Collector, who knows but every thing, says, Robert Bruce held a parliament in Dunstaffnage, where all the barons spoke Gaelick. We came past the pleasant and fertile island of Lesmore, a name signifying a large garden, and on the other side saw the coast of Appin, rich in early verdure and sheltered with groves of oak. The scenery is various and beautiful. This estate is at present possessed by a gentleman of taste and liberality,* who has improved it exceedingly, and, though not a native, seems very much at-

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* Henry Seaton, Esq. since dead.

tached to the place. He has built a stately mansion on it, and, being an enthusiast in regard to antiquities, and a lover of nature, is regarded by the people with as fond an attachment as any of their native chiefs. He is indeed, they say, very kind and good to them. I never saw a place that had more attractions for me; 'tis wild without being savage; woody, but not gloomy; and fertile, but not flat. I wish I were to go no further; I should like to tend a flock of goats among those picturesque crags that form the back-ground of that fine picture. A contrary wind gave me leisure to survey these beauties, but cold rain and driving blasts coming on, his majesty's own wherry was in danger of being upset, like a common boat; and his majesty's own officer began to be afraid, like any other man. I feared nothing but cold and wet, yet was very glad when I heard a proposal of hauling in to shore, which we did opposite to Appin, at the foot of a steep green hill, on the side of which was a dwelling newly erected, not sumptuous, but, by its neat outside and sashed windows, distinguished from those of the common people. We climbed the hill, and were received with a kind of stately civility by a tall, thin, erect person, a widow,—pale, wan, and woe-begone. She never asked who we were, till a good fire and most comfortable tea-drinking, with many other good things, put us in humour to make replies. She asked my mother if we were connected with the country. Now we had just

left my father's country, and entered my mother's. She told the good lady her whole genealogy, by no means omitting the Innernaheyle family, on which the old lady rose with great solemnity, crying, "All the water in the sea cannot wash your blood from mine." This tender embrace was succeeded by a long dissertation on the Innernaheyle family, &c. There is an adventure for you, which will form a suitable conclusion to this important epistle. Adieu ! for the present.

LETTER X.

TO MISS REID, GLASGOW.

Fort William, May 14, 1773.

THE hospitable matron who received us so kindly, is, alas ! a childless widow, yet not poor, as poverty is understood here ; and I really think the standard is better fixed than with you. Is it not due to Providence, to say one is easy, having every necessary and some comforts ? I should like elegance dearly, if she were not so nearly allied to luxury—and luxury too I could tolerate, if she were not so abominably selfish. I can never believe that a being, whose wants are endless and numberless, can spare even a thought to the wants of others. Very luxurious people do some charitable things, but they are induced to

do them by vanity, example, or solicitation. You always hear of heroism and great exertions of all kinds in poor countries. Patience and fortitude, the virtues our helpless state most needs, are the growth of barren soils. I always delighted in Gray's Ode to Adversity; read it once again, and compare its ennobling tenor with my ideas. It is happy I think so: if wealth was every thing to me, as it is to many you know, it would make me miserable to see so many deserving creatures what you would call very poor; but they do not think themselves so, and therefore they are not so.—I know nothing so silly as the disgust and wonder your cockney Misses shew at any custom or dress they are not used to. I now think plaids and faltons (fillets) just as becoming as I once did the furs and wampum of the Mohawks, whom I always remember with kindness.

As this long digression cannot much please, I hope it will greatly improve you. We landed on the west side, and to save sailing round a long point, resolved to walk to Ballachuelish * by the light of the moon: it was a bleak evening, and the wind whistled dolefully while we were passing, in utter darkness, through a small wood; the moon broke through a cloud, and the owl began to hoot most opportunely. I started, and was shewn the cairn (or *rude monument* of loose stones)

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* An estate on the northern border of Argyleshire; possessed by a relation of the Author.

where Campbell of Glenure had been murdered, and where every passenger throws a stone. I can't convey to you the impression, which this assemblage of gloomy images made at once on my mind, aided by the recollection that a worthy and innocent gentleman, related to my mother, suffered death in consequence : though it appeared afterwards, the murder was committed by a soldier in the French service, who lurked in the country since the year 1745, for that purpose. The eulogium and history of this victim of prejudice, kept our attention engaged till we reached Ballachuelish. The lady was not at home ; I was sorry for it. She is a person of more than common understanding and virtue, whom I greatly esteem. She has built a fruit-wall, a thing before unheard of here, and does much good among the common people, with the productions of her garden, where she has medical herbs, which she shews much skill and humanity in applying to their proper uses. I have changed my mind about herding goats, and now the result of my moonlight meditation in the wood, and my reflections on this good lady's well-earned praise, have determined me to seek forthwith,

“ A hairy gown and narrow cell,
“ Where I may sit and nightly spell,
“ Of every star that heaven doth shew,
“ And every herb that sips the dew.”

What fine transitions one might make, from the bright eye of the celestial bull, to the soft eye of

the terrestrial daisy, by thus studying stars and herbs together. A pair of hermits, were that possible, would be a double felicity ; but, perhaps, I may see something to-morrow, at my grandfather's which may suggest a new mode of life to me. But, whether nun, goat-herd, herbalist, or star-gazer, depend on my being unalterably yours.

LETTER XI.

TO MISS REID.

Fort William, May 17, 1773.

I DARE say I am the more prejudiced against this place, because I was brought here so soon against my inclination. The young ladies of Glencroe, with whom I have a remote connexion, and who were at the dancing-school with me the first winter I was in Scotland, (and great companions for the time we were,) sent urgent invitations, and were within two hours ride. I should have liked very much to see them ; the youngest is a fine creature,—all heart and soul, without a thought to hide. Glencroe she has often described to me as very singular in its appearance and situation ;—a glen so narrow, so warm, so fertile, so overhung by mountains, which seem to meet above you,—with sides so shrubby and woody !—the haunt of

roes, and numberless small birds. They told me it was unequalled for the chorus of "wood notes wild," that resounded from every side. The sea is so near that its roar is heard, and its productions abound. It was always accounted (for its narrow bounds) a place of great plenty and security. In this romantick retreat where a blue stream bends its course, with a half circular sweep, through the most peaceful and secluded of narrow vales, the matchless melody of the sweet voice of Cona first awaked the joy of grief. On that account you may well believe the glen is peopled with images, that are "pleasant, yet mournful to the soul." Why did I not go there to meet the fair spirit of Malvina in the haunt of roes? Happy daughter of Toscar! to have thy spotless faith, thy virtuous sorrows, and thy soul-inspired beauties, immortalized in the sublime and tender strains of thy heroick friend! Thrice happy to have the heavenly employment of pouring the balm of sympathy into wounds of the heart, that could not be closed; of supporting the feeble steps of age and blindness; of soothing, with the melting musick of thy voice, and the soft sound of thy plaintive harp, the sorrows of the venerable bard, and of hearing him awake those divine strains, that consecrate to future ages, the fame of thy generous hero, and all thy mild graces and gentle virtues!

Daughter of Toscar! dear and frequent to my nightly visions, come, like a moon-beam, to the

chamber of my repose ! I wish, with all my heart, that I could design and paint like Angelica. Then would I give "a combination and a form indeed," to the beautiful image that exists in my mind, of the fair mourner of Lutha. The sweet sadness of her eyes you should only imagine ; I would not have them profaned by vulgar gaze ; she should sit on the ground beside the prince of bards, her white arm thrown carelessly over her silent harp ; she should look pensively down, as fixed in tender recollection. Her thick locks, blown aside from her fair forehead, as by the autumnal gale, should by chance, as it were, display the pensive grace, marking those fine formed brows from which she took her name ; her beauty should appear fast fading like the many-coloured foliage on the back ground, and mild composure should denote a soul that feels a sad enjoyment in its sufferings, and would not purchase ease at the price of oblivion. Humbler pursuits and duties are wisely assigned to me. In conformity to that designation, which was certainly meant for my happiness, I shall come down to the safer walks of common life, and tell you the sad story that has made this glen frequent in the songs of modern bards, and has even found its way to the page of history, to blot it with crimes unequalled in our age and country.

But, first, that you may estimate duly the renown of this little glen, I must tell you what a tuneful and warlike tribe inhabited it. The tribe

of Macdonalds, called Mac Jans,* or sons of John. who dwelt in this sequestered spot, were all, as the country people say, born poets ; and this belief was so well established, that, if a Mac Jan could not rhyme, his legitimacy was called in question : whatever his other merits might be, he was no genuine Mac Jan. This is not only very strange, but very true ; but I think we may credit it, on the principle of the old bye-word, “ Bode a gown of gowd and ye’ll aye get the sleeve of it.”† The first possessors of this peaceful retreat, were led to take a powerful interest in the songs of Selma, by the proud consciousness of dwelling in the spot made sacred by the birth of the tuneful hero. The profound seclusion in which they lived, encouraged meditation ; the noble objects which surrounded them, and shut out the world, sublimed it. The plenty their retreat afforded to their hunting and fishing pursuits afforded leisure for the Muse. Poetry was universally familiar, where every eminent character rejoiced and mourned in measured strains. All the most obvious images, phrases, and rhymes grew so common, that nothing could be easier than stringing rhymes together like those you have seen me get from —— and ——, who, I doubt not, thought it incumbent on

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* The name should be printed thus : Macian.

† A proverb, indicating, that a strong confidence of success will, at least, procure a degree of the object aspired to.

them to be poetical, as well as the Mac Jans. Rosalind says, in *As you like it*, "I could rhyme you so for a year together ;—dinners, and suppers, and sleeping-times excepted." Whether it was by those mechanick means, or by superior powers of imagination, it appears this tuneful tribe claimed all the respect due to superior talents ; to which was added, that paid to distinguished courage. When they were induced by the fatal feuds, so common in old times, to attack any other tribe, it was not easy to pursue them into their retreats ; and then they sallied forth again with the hardiness produced by impunity. Thus they became fearless themselves, and feared by others. To be concise, they were always with the Stuarts, their neighbour clan, and against their opponents, which, in the end, provoked no common vengeance. In the year 1694, or later, it was required, that all heads of tribes, in that district, should take the oaths to government at Inverary. Now this was a hard pill ; for the Highlanders could never forgive King William for dethroning his uncle. 'Twas quite out of their style of doing injuries ; and the reasons for so doing were beyond their comprehension. Probably Mac Jan was not in the least sorry that a violent storm made the mountains impassable about the last days of grace ; so he made a declaration before some magistrate at Fort William, that he would have gone to take the oaths, if he could. This informality was seized on as a pretext, by

some enemy whom he had in the army, whose ancestors had probably suffered from the fury of a Glencroe irruption. A company marched out, from the Fort, under pretence of quartering in the glen, till the oaths were taken. They were received with the most hospitable kindness ; the officers were lodged in Glenco's house ; the soldiers with his tenants. This happened in the joyous days of Christmas, when it is, if ever, that these people have plenty and good cheer. Glenco was not well, but sat up and played at cards the last night, out of courtesy to the officers. At midnight the soldiers got the word of command ; every man went in and shot his host, and then bayoneted the boys and old people. It was a clear frosty night. The discharges of shot through the echoing glen alarmed those who had given up their beds to their guests, and slept in bye places. Of these I cannot exactly recollect how many escaped to the mountain, to suffer every extremity of cold, hunger, grief, and fear. I have not nerves for the whole detail ; suffice it, that Glenco's last breath was spent in a devout aspiration ; that his superannuated father was murdered in his bed, by an ensign, whose name should never be pronounced, or written ; and that his eldest son, in his eighth year, was stabbed by the same ruffian, when on his knees, imploring mercy.

The present Laird, grandfather to my young friends, was an infant two years old, and was carried off to the hills, by his nurse, unobserved.

The only other male in the chief's house who escaped was the bard ; I am sure he did not, like Phemius, cry out, " O spare the poet's ever gentle mind ;" nor, by any means, owe his safety to his tuneful powers ; but, as every shift had been made to accommodate the strangers, he slept in some odd corner. Next day there was neither smoke seen, nor voice heard in this close-peopled glen, which before contained about three hundred inhabitants. The bard sat alone upon a rock, and, looking down, composed a long dismal song, which I would give all my ear-rings to understand. They say it has not much poetical merit. No wonder—" Small heart had he to sing." Now you are waiting to hear with a savage delight, of the punishments inflicted on those midnight assassins, and the exemplary vengeance that pursued their cruel chief. No such matter ; the cry of blood resounded over all Europe, and the hero of Nassau heard it, as if he heard it not. This was a great blot in his character ; but, no doubt, he had been made to believe, that Glenco was some sanguinary monster, who lived by rapine. Princes adjust their accounts of this kind very easily ; it is but calling people savages, and then their blood is of no value, and their lives of no consequence.

Why should a musical, poetical, and patriarchal highland chief fare better than the Incas of Peru, " where dwelt the gentlest children of the Sun."

William was a hero after all. But authority, pure at the source, is often poisoned in the channels. Yet, though he could not remedy the evil, he ought to have avenged it. Now you would know how the chief agent in this villany ended. He died at a ripe age, abundantly prosperous. But who saw his nightly visions, or felt his secret pangs? The Judge of all the earth never fails to do right, though we cannot always see how.

Satiate with blood, I bid you good night. It is very possible, I am going to occupy the same room the *Ensign* slept in, when he returned from the depopulated glen; he will, may be, come and smile on me, like the blood-smeared Banquo.

“From fairies, and the tempters of the night,
Guard me, good angels.”

I am awake, and have not seen the ensign. Let his memory perish, as well as that of all the wretches who perverted mercy, and abused authority in this place. Of the many shocking details I have been pained with, I shall only recite one. There was an English major, who, in the absence of the governor, commanded the garrison in the dismal year 1746. There was, at that time, after much previous *severity*, a free pardon offered to all the lower class, who would deliver up their arms; those found with weapons in their possession had no mercy to expect.

After supper, when the commandant and his officers were enjoying their bowl in this house, the

serjeant of the guard came in and said, there were three men brought in with their arms,—What should be done with them? “What but hang them!” said the major, impatient of disturbance. Now this was owing to the serjeant’s inaccuracy of expression. The poor men, in fact, were coming in with their arms, to deliver them up, and, meeting one of the out-parties by the way, accompanied them to the garrison. “When the giant awoke from his wine,” it was the first thing he did to look out at the window; and the first object he saw, was the bodies of these unhappy men, hung over a mill opposite. He was filled with horror, not recollecting his last night’s order. When it was explained to him that the poor creatures came to receive the proffered mercy, the intelligence threw him into a deep and lasting melancholy. My father, though of all whigs the bluest, speaks with horror of this transaction, and says he saw a very pretty young widow come to that mill the following winter, whose father, brother, and husband, had been the sufferers.—O! when shall I have spirits to relish the kindness I receive from very worthy people here, and give you some idea of Inverlochy? Dismal, dismal, it appeared to me; drenched with cold rains, and covered with clouds of unusual darkness. The shore so flat and unmeaning! A long low moor spreading behind; very little verdure in sight; no peaceful vales or sweet streams; the very river Nevis to me looks gloomy and stupid; ’tis a

little Acheron. Ben Nevis is a great clumsy mountain, without any fanciful breaks, or fine marked outline, like those of Morven. It is great, without sublimity, and seems to nod above this ugly town, and shake a perpetual drizzle from its misty locks. As far as a mountain can resemble a man, it resembles the person Smollet has marked out by the name of Captain Gawky. I wonder much how any one lives here, who could live any where else.

Yet, I am told, Glenevis has rural beauties, and is very sweet and placid, when once you get into it, which I have no desire to do. The village, which stretches from the Fort, along the banks of the Lochy, is a very tolerable one, could I but think so ; but this Fort, "with many a foul and mid-day murder fed," looks just like a place to kill people in, 'tis so gloomy and uncouth : it is triangular ; the soldiers' barracks are of wood, grown black with the constant rains. We are in the best of the officers' apartments, occupied by a very worthy family, the master of which holds the same half-military employment here, which my father is to exercise at Fort Augustus. I was not in the humour for liking these people if I could help it, but I find I must. They grow upon me every moment, Mr. Gray* is a native of the border ; quite an original : harsh-looking at first,

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 * Mr. Gray was Barrack-master, Post-master, &c. at Fort William ; had large farms, trading vessels, &c. and was in easy circumstances and much respected.

yet, when the smile of benevolence lights up his countenance, and his humour, anecdote, and observation begin to unfold, you would not think him the same person. Mrs. Gray is just recovering from illness ; mild and beautiful I am sure she has been ; and they have a little boy, more lovely than the Cupids in the college ; if he could but speak, he would almost rival Anne the well-beloved. I say so much of people so new to me, because they are the only objects here I can regard with any complacency. If Fort Augustus be such a place, I will certainly become a votary of the

“ Pensive nun, devout and pure,
Sober, steadfast, and demure,”

whom we used to admire so much. Expect to see me when we meet,

“ With sable stole of cypress lawn,
O'er my decent shoulders drawn.”

—I have no spite against this place, but I am provoked at its superabundant negatives. It is a seaport, without being animated ; it is a village, without the air of peace and simplicity ; it is military, without being either gay, or bold looking ; it is country, without being rural ; it is highland, without being picturesque or romantick ; it has plains without verdure, hills without woods, mountains without majesty, and a sky without a sun ; at least his beams appear so seldom, that I wonder the Lochabrians are not dazzled into idolatry, when he walks in his brightness—O, this is a bad

country for a butterfly, a bee, or an enthusiast, to expatiate in ; but it is the best place in the world to remember an absent friend in ! “Thought strays a wretched rover o’er the pleasing past ;” I feel the spark of fancy kindling at the torch of memory ; but as Gray says of Jove’s eagle, “the thunder of whose beak, and lightning of whose eye were to be quenched,” &c. &c. I too will quench my mental light in “dark clouds of slumber.” Meet me in my dreams, daughter of winding Clutha ! Adieu !

LETTER XII.

TO MISS REID.

Fort William, May 20, 1773.

MY DEAR H.

I DARE say you are ready to cry out, “Lochaber no more !” and I am sure I am ready to echo the same note. Yet who ever left a happy family without regret ? and I am about to leave a very happy one. Our host improves upon us every hour. He has good sense, and a good heart : and is a perfect cabinet of that sort of old-fashioned knowledge that I like. He is from near the Law of Berwick, and knows all the traditionary history of the Border ; of the Humes and the Elliots. He is, in fact, a true blood old

Scotsman ; shrewd, cautious, and sarcastick, yet kind and affectionate where he loves.

Do you know if ever I break a resolution you *vow of*, it shall be in favour of an ugly man. Ugly is a harsh word, I only mean plain looking, rather harsh, like Mr. Gray : he should be much older than myself too. These are the people likely to be most grateful for attention, from a person whose youth, &c. &c. might make it presumed, that she had made some sacrifices. I do not suppose myself capable of having any thing to do with folly or knavery ; but, put these out of the question, and if I had a choice of fifty, it would not be the wisest, the wittiest, the wealthiest, nor, by any means, the handsomest, that I should choose. No ; it would be the person capable of most affection, if one had scales that would weigh such a thing. But, wanting these, he who, having the least opinion of his dear self, is likeliest to value another : he, who, having outlived early vanity and romance, can best value “ the sober certainty of waking bliss,” such as this good couple most deservedly enjoy. She is amiable, gentle, and well-bred ; a person of family too. He looks with such calm complacency at her, and is so charmed with every thing she says ! The respect she shews him, is so softened by affection ! She has a sister here,* not the least like her, but an excellent creature ; good-hearted,

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* Miss Graham, still living.

frank-spirited and active. They all form such an harmonious group, and the little boy is so lovely ! There is one in the cradle too ; but I only mind those that can “softly speak, and sweetly smile ;” for the boy of boys has some pretty half-formed words. My father went on a week ago to Fort Augustus, to regulate matters for our removal ; but his predecessor’s family are ill of fevers. We have been urged to stay here till matters are in a train, but have resolved to proceed. I am sure I shall feel much concern when I go away. There is a Major C—ne here, a man of taste and ingenuity, who pleases me much by the delight he takes in talking of his wife, who is certainly very pretty. He has her picture, drawn by himself, with a most angelick expression. Happy artist ! who can thus give a visible and lovely form to the predominant image in his mind. If I could but sing and draw true likenesses of my friends, I think I should not be an unhappy exile, after all—I will not write another word from hence. I am busy with a piece of work, which I mean as a memorial for sweet Mrs. Gray ; and won’t bestow a minute on you, till I see myself in Loch Ness. Good night, my dearest ! Write, or not write, my spirit is with you ; and I feel a pleasure in thinking I can contribute to your amusement.

One more adieu ! *when I meet with another* that possesses your native delicacy, your disinterestedness, your purity of heart, I will forget you : forget all our past happiness, and those

that shared it. Peace be with you, my own Harriet.

LETTER XIII.

TO MISS REID.

Fort Augustus, May 24, 1773.

MY DEAREST HARRIET,

I AM very much disordered by my journey; but, while I am able, I shall endeavour to describe it, for Bell as well as for you, and it is needless to tell you both the same thing.

On Monday we set out on horseback, good Mr. Gray conducting us to Highbridge; and a most instructive and entertaining companion he was. Why did I leave Lochaber without introducing you to the castle of Inverlochy? You never saw such a castle in your life. I mused the whole night after I saw it, on the strange manner in which the inhabitants must have lived. It is large and square, and has the remains of four round towers. It is built of round stones, that never were touched by the hammer. You may guess its venerable antiquity, from the circumstance of Achaius, "our gude Scots king," having signed a league with Charlemagne here, in the eighth century.

Only think how kings could choose such a residence; but they were great hunters, and the

dark moors in view were all a forest then. The sea running up so far into the bosom of the mountains, was also a favourable circumstance: besides, it stands in the mouth of the singular and important Glenmore, which I shall hereafter describe to you. It is somewhat singular that sixteen thanes, or chiefs, of the name of Cumming, witnessed this league.

The progress and declension of power is worth tracing; it makes no unimportant part of the history of human nature. In these days the Cummings were unrivalled in the north, and potent every where. The wisdom and valour of some distinguished individuals, no doubt, procured this influence at first. When they acquired it, they abused their power; by their joint influence, bore down every other name, till, in the end, they became the objects of universal fear and jealousy.

There were doubtless, among so great a number, unworthy individuals, whom the spirit of clan-ship led the more deserving to protect and support, in some instances of violence or fraud. This created a kind of combination against them; and the treachery of the *Red Cumming*, which provoked Robert the Bruce to stab him in the cloister of the Gray-friars at Dumfries, was a mortal stroke to their declining power.

What an astonishing instance it was of our great Robert's royalty of mind, that, when hunted from place to place, pursuing a precarious title to

a despoiled crown, he could, in the glow of virtuous indignation, perform such a deed in such a place, without losing all popularity ! It was the blindness of zeal. The cruelty of the times, attended with bitter exasperations, prevent its being a stain on our liberal-minded hero. Don't think I am diverted from my favourite star in the galaxy of fame ; I always see the spirit of Wallace superior and alone, like Hercules, reposing after his labours. Do not tell me of his being bloody ; no doubt he thought it was the " sword of the Lord, and of Gideon, that he drew : " " Nothing he did in hate, but all in honour." I reverence his hallowed shade, as much at this present moment, as when we were trying to lift his two-handed sword in Dumbarton Castle.*

Now I was as full of the idea of the castle of Inverlochy as possible, when these heroes carried me away. The strength of this venerable pile is wonderful. Mr. Gray has told us how they built these strange walls. There was a frame of boards made of their height and breadth, into which dissolved lime, and stones of all sizes and sorts were poured : when these consolidated, the frame was taken away, and the wall was everlasting. Pray thank me for your first lesson in architecture, which, at any rate, will do you no harm.

Now I am going to commit to your prudent secrecy a flight among the clouds, which I venture

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* We visited this relique the day we parted.

ed in a very stormy day, and a very melancholy hour :

Rave on, ye demons of the storm !
The skies disturb, the seas deform,
And urge the whirling blast !
Commix the waves in wild uproar,
And howl along the desert shore,
While nature shrinks aghast !

From the dark chambers of the sky,
I see the lurid lightnings fly
With quick illusive glance ;
While thunders, murmuring from afar,
Proclaim the elemental war,
And nearer still advance.

Methinks, with horrid joy elate,
Avenging ministers of fate
Now mount the whirlwind's wing ;
And, while they trace their destin'd path,
Tremendous pour the vial'd wrath
Of nature's awful King !

Rage on, ye blasts ! unmov'd by fear,
Your fierce conflicting strife I hear ;
For what have I to dread ?
Not storms, whose fury rends the sky,
Nor thunder, pealing from on high,
Awake th' unconscious dead.

Since dead to hope, and love, and joy,
Why should your power my peace destroy,
Or break my mournful calm ?
Your deepest base, your loftiest tone,
Grateful to me, and me alone,
I feel, like sorrow's balm.

Thus, pleas'd, the sea-fowl cry aloud,
While, toss'd aloft, from cloud to cloud,
 With heedless course they roam ;
With stern delight, unmix'd with care,
They wander thro' the troubled air,
 Like me, without a home !

This, you say, is an exaggeration, for both the sea-fowl and I shall find our home in due time. True ; but this is the language of deep despondency, which aggravates every thing, and looks to no future comfort. The poetry of sorrow, however real the sorrow may be, sees images through mist, and enlarges them. In these cases, where there is imagination and an ear for harmony that predispose one to it, solitude and sadness very naturally lead the mind "to feed on thoughts that voluntary move harmonious numbers." This amusement may tend to soothe and to refine the mind, but whether one is the happier for refinement, is a doubtful case ; though I were wise enough, I am too drowsy for decision. The account of my journey must also be deferred till to-morrow, when, I trust, my head will be clearer, and my heart lighter. I will tell you of the diabolical quotation which occurred to me on entering the chamber which is to be mine.

"Receive thy new possessor, one who brings

"A mind not to be chang'd by time or place."

I left my narrative yesterday to mount the clouds and chase phantoms. I am now very sick,

and very sober, and resolved to be methodical. If I grow worse, our correspondence will terminate in the only way it ever shall; if not, I must attend my wonted duties, and lay down my pen. But this day is mine, and shall, therefore, be yours. Know, then, beloved, that the Glenmore, or Great Valley, is an opening from sea to sea, across Scotland, through some of the wildest parts of the Highlands. On the east, the spacious frith of Cromarty, at the head of which lies Inverness, runs up between Ross-shire and Murray, a great way inward, till it reaches the Highlands; then on the west, you sail in between Appin, Lesmore, and Mull, till you come to Loch Linnhe, an inlet of the sea, on which Fort William stands. A little further, as you go towards Fort Augustus, you meet with the Lochy, a river which, coming in a westward course from Loch Lochy, discharges itself into Lochinnhe, at the old castle of Inverlochy, properly signifying the discharge of the Lochy. Over brown and unvaried moors, we travelled, still in sight of this short river, till we arrived at its parent lake, long, narrow, and remarkable for nothing, but its occupying some miles of the Glenmore, and, having had the last battle between adverse clans fought on its banks, which are a dull flat. What gives it interest is, that, when you arrive at the end of it, you see and feel yourself in the centre betwixt the two seas, and see at once the Lochy and the Oich on each side of you, running in opposite directions,

one making its way through Loch Linnhe to the west sea, and the other through Loch Ness into the Murray Firth, on the east. It is those fast-following lakes, linked by filial streams, that form the opening which the three forts were meant to guard, and which, they say, invites art to the aid of nature in forming a canal, that should in a manner, divide Scotland; but that will be the business of a wiser and a richer century.* I should have told you, in the right place, of my passing High-bridge, eight or nine miles, I think, from Fort William. It crosses the Spean, a small river, which rushing down from the central mountains, has worn a channel of astonishing depth. Over this, two shrubby craggs project. This bridge is thrown across from the one to the other, and the arches, founded in the river, are ninety feet high. You know how little I understand, or care for buildings; but fine bridges cast over deep chasms, have that kind of grandeur that seizes on my Gothick imagination. The effect of this one must be forcible, I should think, on every mind. After so much dreary moor, the shrubbery and verdure about it refresh the eye; and the simple majesty of these lofty arches forms a fine contrast to the noble, though irregular piles of rock-work, which they connect. The "boiling" and "wheeling" of the waters below animate the view; and even its dizzy horror pleases, after the long pause of

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* This prediction is now fulfilling.

dreary stillness you have just quitted. Another far-seen object gives sad variety to the prospect, before you leave the languid sameness towards Loch Lochy ; it is Lochiel and the ruins of Achnacarrie, once the mansion of the gentle chieftain of the Camerons.* I call him gentle, because he really was so. His disposition was milder, his manners softer, and his mind more cultivated than those of his companions in misfortune, to use a soft word. He was like Brutus among the conspirators, whom you used to admire in the play :

“ The rest did what they did in envy of great Cæsar,

“ He only, in a general honest thought,” &c. &c.

No man sacrificed more domestick comfort to mistaken principle. No man had clearer views of the fatal result. In vain he endeavoured to dissuade the adventurer, who landed near his house, from carrying on his ill-supported project. When he saw his doubts were misconstrued into fear, he took a tender leave of his family, and plunged into the gulf where he foresaw destruction. Can I possibly quit Achnacarrie, without proudly reciting an instance of the generous attachment of the tenants to their exiled chief. His estate was forfeited, and they paid the usual rent to the Crown ; besides this, they voluntarily paid

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* The estate of this respectable exile, forfeited in the year 1745, has been by his present Majesty restored to his descendant, the present Lochiel.

a rent to support Lochiel's family abroad. When the demesne was taken by some friends for their behoof, the tenants stocked it with cattle of all kinds. This too was a pure benevolence ; and to this my grandfather, one of that faithful band, amply contributed. Mr. Gray is provoked at my stupidity, in not being lost in admiration and astonishment at the military roads. Highbridge, which makes a part of them, I do admire, but have no clear apprehension of their general beauty, or wonderful usefulness. I do not just take it for granted, that they are to civilize the country so speedily and effectually ; the people were very *civil* when they were well treated ; they were so agile and familiar with their own bye-paths, and so accustomed to go

“ Over moor, over mire,

“ Thro' bush, and thro' briar,”

that I am not clear they will always forsake their old short cut, for the pleasure of going ten miles round on hard gravel. These roads will afford access to strangers, who dislike and despise the natives, because they do not understand them ; and to luxuries they cannot afford to pay for, and would be happier without. Early accustomed to savage life, I have not the horror at it that wiser people have. As far as merely regards this world, I am not sure how much my old Mohawk friends have to gain by being civilized ! nor are my expectations very sanguine of the felicity which more knowledge of good and evil will pro-

duce here. They know the plain, the narrow path, which revelation has traced out to a happy immortality; and what more can they know, that will not be vanity and vexation of spirit, to a country which nature meant to be poor. I am sure savages have more useful and pleasing knowledge than people imagine, were it only that of birds and plants.

This, perhaps, is saying too much; but I am so provoked at seeing shallow, artificial people, who have no ideas but what they borrow, treating the inventive children of the wild with scorn. Those who pace all their lives on in an even-paved road, doing every day just what they did yesterday, are unable to estimate the powers of those, who must bend their mind every hour to some new and unpremeditated exertion. After we passed the centre of the Glenmore, where the waters divide. I was much pleased to find woody hills, and green plains, narrow, but beautiful, opening before me. Lagganachadrom charmed me: it seemed so rural, so peaceful, and so social. Thinking what innocent sylvan beings dwelt in those huts, I contemplated them with secret pleasure; and so would you, knowing no more than I did. I am sure there were forty distinct buildings spread out on a smooth little plain, of the softest, freshest verdure. The broad end of Loch Oich, the prettiest of all possible lakes, forms the base of this triangular plain: the steep green hill of Letterfinlay, on the slope of which the light fo-

liage of the drooping birch waved in the evening gale, formed one side, and the variegated slopes and broken copses on the Glengarry side, the other. Mr. Gray had returned. We had a boy, very smart and intelligent, who took care of our horses. Lost in contemplation, we were enjoying this pastoral scenery, when we were interrupted with "Ladies, the greatest thieves in all the country live in these houses." We were shocked, but found, upon inquiry, that this sweet hamlet was really inhabited by the only remaining horde of those plunderers, who used to consider making a *spreath* as a gallant exploit; now, a spreath was carrying away forcibly a herd of cattle, and fighting their way through all opposition. I felt a kind of horror on finding that the cluster of innocent peasants' cottages I had been admiring was merely a den of thieves. I now began to hold the military road, and civilizing the natives, in all due reverence. Nay, such a complete convert was I become, that I felt inclined to admire a happy thought of a worthy good-natured Irishman, Governor Caulfield, at Fort George, who most poetically exclaimed,

"Had you seen these roads before they were made,
"You would hold up your hands, and bless Marshal
Wade."

I wish I could share with you the pleasure I felt, in admiring, in a sweet still May evening, the scenery round *Loch Oich* and Invergarrie; the declining sun was shining, immediately after one

of those soft warm showers that steal silently down, refreshing all nature, and awakening the whole woodland melody. A blackbird on one side of Loch Oich, poured out the fullest strain of wild musick I ever heard; while a wood-lark from the streaming birch-trees on the other side, seemed emulous of his notes, and was more sweetly liquid, though not so loud. Do the birds really sing sweeter here, or does the wild scenery of these narrow vales reverberate the sound, and produce a tone of feeling more accordant to the musick of nature? I never before felt the magick spell of sweet-according sounds so powerful. O! how I wished for some one to share a luxury that wealth cannot purchase, and that thousands are not born to taste!

“O! blind to truth, to virtue blind,
“Who slight the sweetly pensive mind,
“On whose birth the Graces mild,
“And every muse prophetick smil’d.”

“These are the spirits born to know and prove,
“All nature’s charms immense, and heaven’s un-
bounded love.”

From this trance I was waked by a bright gleam of the parting sun, which threw its yellow radiance on the opposite windows of Invergarrie house. This has all the characteristick features of the seat of a Highland chieftain—the lake, with little wooded islands, that seemed to float on the calm surface before it; the rapid river rushing down from the mountains, pouring its full stream

into the lake beside it; the remaining tower of the ancient castle frowning proudly on the modern house; the long habitable glen opening back from the mansion of the chief, embossomed in woods and rocks, and animated by clusters of warm peaceful hamlets. From these every peasant rushes to arms, when his master's honour or safety is endangered: here every man is a hunter, a fisher, and an architect, in his own way; and there is a musician in every house, and a poet in every hamlet.

Alas! for me, that am of "language strange," and have returned to the land of my forefathers, with only this *Chaldean* English. "Dark sayings on the harp" are dark indeed to me.

I greatly wish you saw Glengarry,* it is so picturesque; the glen that ascends from it, instead of narrowing, as usual, grows broader as it retires back, till you arrive at Loch Garrie, from whence the river of that name descends. The castle surrounded by a very respectable garden of old renown, is half a mile west of the house. Rich cornfields, a great relief to the eye, after the *brown desert*, fill up the interval; and westward from the castle, Killeanan, gently sloping, verdant and diversified, closes the prospect with due so-

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 * Macdonnel of Glengarry is head of a considerable branch of that powerful clan, who spell their names in that manner to distinguish them from the Macdonalds of the Isles, attached to Lord Macdonald.

lemnity : for there the family burial place, a pretty large enclosure, shaded with lofty old trees, arrests the attention. I think the mind broods with more calm and steady attention over the last refuge of mortality, when appropriated in this manner to a particular set of people, whom the imagination can grasp and follow, than over the resting places of unknown multitudes, where thought wanders in forlorn confusion “along the waste dominions of the dead.” You must muse alone, as much as I have done, before you can be capable of penetrating the gloom of a paragraph so sublimely obscure as my last. Tombs, like heroes, have a peculiar attraction for me, I cannot get quietly past them.—After having thus transgressed and digressed, I shall keep you at Invergarrie, to view the back ground towards the north, where the prospect rises into the most blue, ærial, and fantastick groupe of broken rocks and mountains I ever beheld. Through these you can neither ride nor properly walk, but the natives contrive to swim and creep, and wade and leap, much in the way Satan did when he visited the “Anarch old,” and then they arrive at another estate belonging to Glengarry, on the sea-side, a wondrous region, called Knoidart, where there are no first floors at all, but all is garret or cellar ; inaccessible precipices, overhanging mountains, and glens narrow, abrupt, and cut through with deep ravines, combining with rapid streams, dark pools, and woods so intricate, that the deer can

scarce find their way through them. Yet the natives are looked upon as happier than others. Redundant grass and luxuriant heath afford abundance to their cattle, who are never housed in winter. Deer, wild fowl, and fish, are in great plenty ; salmon, in particular, crowd their rivers, and shell-fish of all kinds abound on their rugged coasts. All this they enjoy without a rival or competitor, for who could go for it, or carry it away ? Bread indeed is a foreign luxury with them, they raising little or no corn ; a ship however comes once or twice a year, and brings them a supply of meal in exchange for butter and cheese. This is the asylum of the catholicks ; all who live in the country are of that profession, and, wonderful to tell, a gentleman of family, great learning, genteel manners, and most spotless life, a bishop of their communion, spends his life in this truly savage abode ; he has no other motive but the desire of doing good to those who can make him no adequate recompense. There too, in the most secluded recess of these wilds, in a corner so obscure that the sun can scarce shine on it, is a seminary, where boys are educated for the priesthood, (that is, prepared for foreign seminaries,) through very great poverty and hardship. Sure these people imagine they suffer for conscience sake ; and absurd as their tenets are, to say the best of them, we must not think they can dissemble for a whole lifetime, nor have we room to think, that any one can lead a self-denying and up-

right life without the divine aid. I fear we poor creatures are merciless to each other ; I don't like to think of their opinions, yet am happy when I hear of the gold of good intention glittering through the dross of error.—How I have wandered ! but the thing nearest my heart, now that I care so little for most worldly matters, is to shew to you every object in the clearest light in which it appears to myself. I would carry you with me wherever I go ; I would teach you to think, that you might supply the defect of timely tuition, by giving, yourself, some culture to that excellent understanding. Your mind is too good a soil to run to waste. When I think of your native taste, your delicacy of feeling, and that rectitude of judgment which is your peculiar excellence, I grieve that you know so few who comprehend what you possess, or know what you are capable of acquiring. How pleasing to see the beauties of such a mind expanding ! (Will that pleasure ever again be mine ?) Let me suppose it, in the mean time, a mirror, in which the images that pass through mine will be reflected. I cannot think how any one who has ever tasted the rich banquet of intellectual pleasure, mingled with the sweets of friendship, can exist deprived of it. Sure the Lotos that Ulysses' friends found, was something like it : no wonder they would not come away. If I did not think of you, and could not write to you, how forlorn I should be, and how little would “ the charm of earliest birds,” or the

wild scenes of enchantment, that rise here and there amidst the *brown desert*, avail to comfort me. Adieu, my dear. It is time to leave off "*chewing* the food of sweet and bitter fancy." Good night.

LETTER XIV.

TO MISS REID.

Fort Augustus, May 25, 1773.

SMALL heart have I to write, and can as yet tell you little of Fort Augustus. It was dark before we descended to the house which is to be ours; of which I can only say, that it stands in something like a grove, and that this grove rises on a point at the confluence of the Oich with Loch Ness. We drank tea with our predecessor's family; they are still convalescents. - - - - - The clergyman of the place* was the only stranger; of whom I was previously told that he was handsomer than any body: he appeared more modest than most handsome men, who are less tolerable, I think, than mere handsome women. - - - - - They cannot remove for ten days, and here am I very much indisposed "in the worst inn's worst room;" and to mend the matter, just above the

* Rev. James Grant, afterwards Minister of Laggan.

best bad room, where all strangers are received ; and worse still, this room has a vocal floor, like the one at Luss. Oh ! for a carpet ! the only luxury (not intellectual) that I have longed for since I left you.—Worse and worse—if I do not get better, remember the last word I write is my benediction to you.

LETTER XV.

TO COLLECTOR MACVICAR, ON THE CLANDESTINE
MARRIAGE OF HIS DAUGHTER.

Fort Augustus, May 25, 1773.

MY DEAR SIR,

I KNOW not how to console you, nor indeed how to mention the event that has grieved us all so much ; yet, after all, this new connexion is a gentleman by birth and education.

Very great blame there certainly is, but a small part comparatively remains with those who are in a great measure sufferers from their own imprudence. The contrivers and abettors of this rash union are more deserving of your anger than the parties themselves. Marriages thus hasty and clandestine have sometimes proved fortunate beyond all expectation. It was perhaps too great a charge for a creature so young and lovely, without a protector of her own sex, to manage a family, and be obliged to entertain all kinds of compa-

ny. I know—I am certain, your heart must relent towards her, when you consider fully of it. The regiment I am told is ordered abroad ; they may be years without meeting ; she will return home penitent and thoughtful, to take charge of your affairs ; and, her fate being now fixed, will have no object to draw off her attention.

I am confined here ; and reading some of the books I had from you is my only consolation ! When I am well enough to write more at large, I shall endeavour to amuse you with my crude opinions, for which I shall make no apology, as it is in compliance with your own desire. I am, very sincerely,

Yours, with much esteem.

LETTER XVI.

TO COLLECTOR MACVICAR.

Fort Augustus, May 28, 1773.

MY DEAR SIR,

SINCE I wrote to you last, I have been most intent on biography, and quite engrossed by heroes and legislatures. I am afraid and ashamed, after all my promises of frankness, to tell you who is my favourite. When I look up to the great legislator of the north, like Shenston's little boys,

“ I do in passing wonderment abound,
And think *he* been the greatest wight on ground.”

I am astonished and borne down with the force of that mighty mind, which burst all the golden chains of imperial pomp and prejudice,—which came streaming like the aurora borealis, to pour its splendours on the regions of darkness ; and which stooped like the fabled Antæus, to gain strength from the earth, and rise with fresh vigour. Selfabasement, matchless patience, and stubborn perseverance, virtues dealt sparingly to the hero kind, were his pre-eminently. I survey his new creation with astonishment ; I see him presiding at the birth of intellect with reverence ; and yet, I respect and admire, without loving or esteeming this extraordinary character. He was a heartless barbarian after all ; his views were often just and always great, but he did not care whom or what he trampled on, to attain to the completion of them. Only think of him, like another Herod, sacrificing so many hundred innocents to his preposterous salt-water experiment. It was an insolent and impious attempt to conquer nature. Then how many thousands fell victims to his ambition of building that shocking town Petersburg ! He might have made the principal street of *dead men's bones* (as children say of London Bridge in the old ballad) provided he applied the remains of the poor peasants to that purpose. *Five hundred thousand* people to be sacrificed with such cool deliberation, to create a sea port ! I am sure,

though he did conquer nature there, it was a dear-bought victory. Which of Shakspeare's heroes is it that says with such bitter regret,

“If I am forced

To draw this sword to be a widow-maker,
Bear witness heaven,” &c. &c.

That was generous, open war; fatal and depopulating at best, no doubt, yet a field for noble exertions, and for the display of some shining qualities. But to go calmly and coolly with a hatchet and a trowel to be a widow-maker to such an extent,—I have no patience with the cold-hearted tyrant. If you *will* know what I think of him, you must not call it prudery when I express insuperable disgust at his marriage, and at the blind admiration which that circumstance of his life has excited. To divorce his wife without a pretext,—to give the example to a great empire, which he professed to enlighten and reform,—of a father's bringing, not merely his own mistress, but the mistress of other men, to rule over his family, to be the mother-in-law of his son, the heir of that vast empire! What father could place confidence in his son, or give him lessons of virtue, when conscious that he had forfeited all claim to his reverence? What husband, what father can find felicity exclusive of his family? What laurels, what eulogies can extract the sting of domestick misery? The wretched, withered heart, pines unrefreshed, like Gideon's fleece, that lay dry, while all nature shared the genial influence of the dews

of heaven. On the evil consequences resulting to society, from breaking down the partition wall which separates the undeviating from contagion, volumes might be written, replete with instruction, corroborated by facts. But a single fact selected from the life of this mighty legislator, contains the essence of volumes ; it is that of beheading a gentleman of his bed-chamber, a handsome favourite of the empress, on the mere surmise that this favour extended beyond due limits. You will recollect too that the Czar had his head exposed on a pole in the pathway, and he drove out his happy empress in a sledge past the *pole*. She did not ask what head it was, nor did he make the least allusion to it. What easy intercourse, what perfect confidence ! Now there could be only two ways of viewing this circumstance ; Catherine was guilty, or she was not. If she was guilty, how peculiarly aggravated was that guilt ; how depraved was that mind ; how vicious those habits ; how hardened that ingratitude ; which, in spite of the light of her own excellent understanding ; in spite of the dangers and spies that surrounded her, could add a deeper blot to all former stains, and could look with cool dissimulation on the dreadful result of her crime ! Now, had Peter, as he ought to have done, if convinced of her guilt, hurled her down to contempt and infamy, the world would have approved the justice of his vengeance, and her memory would perish with the opprobrium of that very world, which

now applauds her because she was prudent and fortunate. Add the reflection, of what life a man of a great mind and strong passions must afterwards lead, with a person whose infidelity and ingratitude he was convinced of; how the mere shame of having debased himself by such an alliance, must have made him swallow his injuries. Consider too, how totally that delicacy, which inhabits every pure and noble mind, must be extinguished, before a man could live on with a person whom he inwardly despised. Say, then, that in a rash fit of jealousy, he, a legislator, a self-conqueror, neither young nor romantick, had taken the life of a man whom he afterwards found reason to believe innocent? Can there be a stronger testimony of the disquiet, distrust, and restless perturbation, which must result from such an alliance? Othello talks of

“The minutes he tells o’er

Who doats, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves.”

What then must be his fate, who begins his married life by laying a broad and just foundation for jealousy? What woman who hopes for protection, would marry a known coward? Is life, or any thing pertaining to it, so dear as that honour, that very existence of his family, which a man intrusts to his wife? Though surrounded with glory, and admired by all the world, is it to be wondered at, that the Great Peter so often drowned in wine the bitterness of reflection? Had he built fewer ships and towns, and begun his great work with reform-

ing the morals of his subjects by his own example, his work might have been slower, perhaps, but it would have been surer. Elegance and refinement are easily added to wisdom and virtue, they are indeed produced by them ; when a man is brought to think rightly and act justly, his taste improves apace ; and we see all over the world, where virtue languishes, the arts decay. I must return to justify my limited admiration of your favourite hero, who I suspect stands the higher with you for being an artist, like your own duke Archibald. How a man should be great without generosity, seems wonderful ; and yet great he was, and generous he was not : no, not in a single recorded instance. His promoting foreigners, who would not stay among his bears without promotion, I should only call sound policy. I shall not detail what every page evinces ; I will not grate my feelings with the recollection of the accumulated cruelty and injustice which sent the brave Swedes, prisoners of war, gentlemen, and servants of a generous and heroick master, to expiate the crime of obedience in the deserts of Siberia ; which sent generals, who had struck terror into the heart of Moscow, and dazzled all Europe with the splendour of their actions, to build huts in Siberia with their own hands, and teach his half rational slaves to plant turnips on the banks of the Oby. To sum up all, I consider Peter as a man wise and brave without virtue. Perhaps his hard unbending character was as well calcu-

lated to make political reforms in Russia, as the sanguine and ferocious temper of John Knox, for making religious ones in Scotland.—I will not apologize. You bid me read biography, to teach me to think ; I have thought, and here is the result. If I have not made you very angry, I will next give my thought of this rival hero. Will you, dear Sir, continue to think that I respect your opinions, reverence your judgment, and shall always be your obliged friend and obedient servant.

LETTER XVII.

TO COLLECTOR MACVICAR.

Fort Augustus, May 30, 1773.

I REJOICE, dear Sir, that you are pleased with my sincerity, and not *displeased* with my enthusiasm. I hope it will not, as you seem to think, evaporate with time. I trust I shall be an enthusiast in friendship, and in the love of virtue and of nature, all the days of my life. How could spirits, aspiring after something better than this world affords, exist in this gloomy uncongenial clime without it? When torpor threatens to chill the soul, enthusiasm warms and animates it; when the mind tends to be languid and enervated, it invigorates and braces it. 'Tis the fan of

a warm climate, and the fur of a cold one. Whoever did much good to others, without a degree of enthusiasm, to loosen the faculties from their cohesion with self-love ? I will no longer bewilder myself among figures, for I see you ready to compare me to Hudibras,

“Who could not ope
His mouth but out there flew a trope.”

Yet is not enthusiasm pardonable, when about to enter on the discussion of a life of wonders, where all is true yet nothing probable ? Even the right marvellous life of Charles the Twelfth ?—The unfortunate have few friends. This remark is neither so trite nor so invidious in my application of it as it may at first appear ; we are not always malignant, but we are very often lazy ; people's misfortunes are so often owing to their own misconduct, that, without examining into particulars, we are ready to take it for granted in most cases, and become unjust, to save ourselves the trouble of candid investigation. Never was there a human being whose character was more modelled by peculiarities in his situation and education ; by irresistible impulses from without and from within, all driving him on to that ardent extreme, to which his natural temper too forcibly inclined. Reared under a father cold and stern ; defectively educated ; taught from childhood to value nothing but military glory ; left so very young to act for himself, and surrounded by people little skilled in the elegant arts, who had not learned to es-

timate truly the softer graces and milder virtues of civilized life—Young, inexperienced, yet full of valour, generosity, and integrity, a storm broke around him, which involved all his future life in tempests. The perfidious confederacy of the three royal robbers, who, under the mask of friendship, had agreed to take advantage of the minority of a brother sovereign, to despoil him of his crown, and divide his territories, while it called forth the military talents of the young prince, to prompt and astonishing exertion, gave, at the same time, an inflexible bias to his mind. The more upright and pure he felt his own sentiments, the more indignation this conduct must have excited. There is no motive that could stimulate the human mind to persevering hostility, but what mingled in this case ; revenge, which the provocation had almost exalted into virtue ; the patriot passion burning for his injured country ; emulation, excited by rivals, brave, powerful, and invidious ; the ardour of youthful enthusiasm animating

“ A frame of iron, and a soul of fire ;”

and, finally, the

“ Fatal love of fame, that glorious heat,
Only destructive to the brave and great.”

Stern, obstinate, and uncultured, highly exasperated and signally victorious ; what was the conduct of this prince, when the proud city of Copenhagen lay at the feet of a victor, scarce seventeen ? Piety, moderation, clemency, and magna-

nimity, marked every step of his progress. Had he not outlived that year, it would have been very unjust to characterize him as a mere warrior. Even then he was something more, and something better. After granting terms dictated by lenity and probity to this faithless enemy, let us view his conduct to the more faithless Czar, after the victory at Narva ; that victory whose rapidity distanced belief, while its splendour dazzled imagination. Still we find him acting with the generosity of a true hero, and the courtesy of a preux chevalier, without fear or reproach ; ascribing all glory to the God of battles, and treating the vanquished with unequalled humanity. Could it be expected, that in the midst of this brilliant and rapid career, he should readily listen to terms of accommodation, dictated by those very fears that insured his future victories ; from an enemy too, who had planned the destruction of his country ? —Would the great Gustavus, wise and pious as he was, have done it in the same circumstances ? Besides, he was actuated by the spirit of chivalry, and considered his courage as the gift of Providence, bestowed upon him to redress the injured and protect the weak. How different would be the judgment of the world, regarding his conduct in Poland, had success attended him to the end of his career ! Was not Augustus a perjured prince, without honour or morality ; who governed by intrigue, broke every compact, and violated every duty, both to his Saxon and Polish subjects ?

What did Charles do, but remove him from a throne which he had degraded to venality, and stained by his vices ? He sent him back to Saxony, which he should never have left. Finding that the Poles, corrupted by the example of a king, at whose deposition they rejoiced, had neither virtue nor concord remaining, sufficient for the purposes of a free election, he pointed out to them a young man, noble, brave, virtuous, and candid, to whom he seemed attracted by congenial rectitude of mind, and who represented one of their most illustrious families. Why does not the scene close here ? Why not stop, while we have the pleasure of contemplating this extraordinary man, with hands unstained by cruelty and injustice, and a heart pure from every sinister motive, “ acknowledged lord of pleasure and of pain,” neither to be attracted by the one, nor repelled by the other ; dispensing crowns and dignities with the most disinterested liberality ; receiving the homage of the north and the splendid embassies of the east, with unvarying modesty ; and uniting in his habits of life the activity and ardour of a soldier, with the simplicity and abstemiousness of an anchorite ! He indeed was a hero to his valet de chambre, for he had nothing to conceal, nothing to be ashamed of. But who could drink so deep of the cup of prosperity, without being in some degree intoxicated ? Who can pass through life without committing some fault, the consequences of which cloud and embitter it ?

His treatment of Patkul was indeed very barbarous ; I never think of it without horror, and feel little inclined to be the advocate of cruelty : but, from the undeviating rectitude of his general conduct, this being the sole instance in which he was charged with injustice, it is but candid to suppose, he considered himself as inflicting death on a traitor. The manner of it is not to be palliated ; it is a great but a single stain. His subsequent schemes of ambition were doubtless extravagant and injudicious ; and the rashness of endeavouring to combat the elements and subdue nature, in his march to Pultowa, was still more so. Yet he led his men to no hardships that he did not share with them ; he was certainly deceived by flatterers, who attacked him on his only vulnerable side, by persuading him he could overcome difficulties, from their nature insurmountable. Can you withhold your pity and your admiration from him in that sad crisis of his fate, when the sun of his prosperity set, to rise no more ; or when he bore the utmost bodily pain, and the most wringing anguish that a great mind can suffer, without a change in his countenance or temper ? Can any thing equal his fortitude and patience in Turkey, or his wild heroism at Bender, where his liberality and simple manners, his unstained morals and undaunted mind, won reverence and affection from the very Janizaries ; or his unshaken perseverance in Demetika, where he lay eleven months in bed, in perfect health, to escape the risk of de-

gradation, to him the greatest of evils ? I own his reign was a misfortune to his people : I confess it was happy for him and them that it terminated so soon ; when exasperation, injuries, and disappointments, had driven him to a kind of obstinate desperation. Yet still I admire and regret him, and look upon him as a man, brave and virtuous, without wisdom ; whose great qualities may be safely admired, without the least danger of their being imitated. He is unique, and will continue so. You wonder at my preference, but I cannot give much of my admiration without some of my esteem. Again, this self-subdued hero serves to establish my favourite maxim : without self-denial and self-conquest, I have no idea of any consistent virtue. Who can depend, for a moment, on a character open to all the attacks of passion, all the allurements of pleasure ? A case like his, where so many causes concurred to urge him on to pursuits so fatal and pernicious, can occur but very seldom. But what soldier, emulous of his well-won fame, would not benefit by imitating his temperance, his probity, his contempt of pleasure, and his abhorrence of meanness ? Peace to his shade ! which has doubtless, ere now, claimed kindred with a far more amiable hero ; but his only equal in unwearied perseverance, romantick and extravagant courage, unconquerable strength of mind and body, and unblemished purity of morals. You have found out, ere now, that I mean our own unequalled Wallace. They both

early began the race of glory ; both stemmed the torrent of adversity with unshaken fortitude ; both refused honours and dignities with steady magnanimity ; and both, at a very early period, fell victims to misfortune. Our hero had a manifest superiority in the uprightness of his motives. Unbiassed by ambition or vanity, he lived and died a generous patriot. Conqueror to the last, he subdued the rigour of his fate by the calm cheerfulness with which he met it. The noble sentiments he displayed in the last scene of suffering, overcame the resentment of a hostile nation, so that

“ His fair fame, with clear and radiant blaze,

“ Spreads and grows brighter with the lapse of days.”

So far the Scot has the advantage of the Swede ; a proof that the world is not always unjust. I have been tedious on this favourite theme. I wish to hear your criticism. Though I am sanguine, like Wallace, I am not obstinate like Charles, and shall yield up my errors to your correction, with all due submission.

I am, &c. &c.

LETTER XVIII.

TO MISS REID.

Fort Augustus, June 5, 1773.

MY dear, I have been so sick and so studious, and so willing to please and amuse the Collector, under his late severe affliction, that I have given you, and our trusty and well beloved Bell, room to suppose I have already forgot you. My right hand was at one time very near forgetting her cunning; but my heart, like poor Maria's, is still warm, and while it beats I shall tenderly remember you both. Your letter is, like yourself, all truth, nature, and candour. Don't be discouraged; there lies no fair comparison between us. Forced to read and think from childhood, for want of brother, sister, or companion of my own age; toss'd from place to place, and early accustomed to the society of my superiors in age and knowledge; what should my mind do but unfold? You had every disadvantage; I shall never be other than I am, but you will every day improve.—I had no pleasure in writing to you of that marriage which I knew you would hear of but too soon. I certainly should make a very bad Duenna. She is a strange creature, and could not be improved. Her pride was in high company, but her pleasure in low; for her equals she never cared, and reading I never could get her to relish. How very

vigilant my good angel was the day before I left Oban, when I took that strange sudden desire to come away, which has been so much for my peace and credit! The very night I left them, this marriage took place; it was celebrated in the garden during an ominous shower of snow, with no other witnesses than that happy pair who had acted the same part themselves so lately. Unhappy creature, what a fond parent has she plunged into grief and disappointment! He had great hopes of her; her beauty and plausibility warranted them. - - - - - Love to our Bell. I can tell you nothing of the place. My cough has been drowned in decoctions of mountain herbs, given me by the best woman in the world, who keeps this house; I should have died but for her. I have not gone down stairs yet, and am at a loss with this *pervious* floor, whether to wish myself deaf, or all the guests dumb. If uncle Francis, with his irritable nerves were here, it would either kill or cure him. Do you know I have not been in Eumaus's pig-house this month, which you used to say was my favourite haunt.—The poor dear Odyssey is quite neglected; I have forsaken it for biography; I can speak of nobody less than a king or a general, and shall take the first opportunity of introducing you to prince Mazeppa. Tweed and Clyde are not worth a farthing now, I can think of nothing but Dneiper and the Boristhenes. I have some toleration too for the Wolga. "O voman, voman!" as Win Jenkins says, "If

you knew but the pleshur we scullers have when we censter the crabbit werds." You see spirits will return with health, but you must expect no more bulky letters from your unchangeable, &c.

LETTER XIX.

TO MISS REID.

Fort Augustus, June 15, 1773.

I WILL describe this place to you, if I can. It is a miniature of New-York as to situation, and upon that you have often heard me descant; only this is on a very small scale. The village, and remains of the old fort, stand on a little rising ground above the Oich, a sweet wild murmuring stream, that comes down on the north side from Loch Oich and Glengarry: on the south side, the Tarffe steals through deep wooded glens from the Corryarick, and wanders, at length, through a meadowy low valley, bounded by very steep woody braes, on the garrison side, and a mountain, gentle in its ascent, verdant and cultivated half-way up, on the other, surrounded by rugged rocks, that seem to frown sullenly on the sweet scenes below.

The fort stands on the brink of the lake, near the centre, and the Oich and Tarffe discharge their pure streams into it on each side. Next

the lake, the Governor has created a most picturesque shrubbery and garden in the dry ditch that surrounds the fort, and has covered the wall with fruit trees, and hid the masked battery with laurels. That beautiful spot the glacis, is almost an island: the village looks down on it from the west; on the north and south it is enclosed by the Tarffe and Oich, a bridge crossing each, parrallel with the fort; on the east, Loch Ness forms a noble boundary, with its pier, and solitary vessel, which the vastness of the surrounding objects diminishes to a toy. The fort too appears the prettiest little thing you can imagine. You would suppose some old veteran had built himself a house with a ditch and drawbridge, to remind him of his past exploits. I have not been in it yet, but the barracks form the walls, and they are so white and clean-looking, and the bastions so green and rural, and it is so fancifully planted round with the mountain-ash, you would think Vertumnus commanded here, and had garrisoned the fort with Dryads. The lake, which opens in a long vista below, reflects this fairy fortress; and a still more rural scene, a little to the north, on a long fantastick-looking point, at the junction of the Oich with the lake, stands my father's house, surrounded with tall ash-trees and gardens. Very near it is that of the commander of this solitary vessel. The serene grandeur of this lake in a calm is not be described. Bold, steep mountains rise on the south side; little retiring bays and

sloping woods give variety to the north: and the reflection is so fine; nothing interrupts it for twenty-four miles, at the end of which the lake discharges, through the short rapid river Ness, into the Murray Firth. The immediate scene, in short, is tranquil and beautiful, while the surrounding objects are all rude and majestick. About half a mile up the smiling meads that border the Tarffe, is the village burrying-ground, a place of old renown, where many a soldier sleeps to wake no more. As I stood at the door in the afternoon, contemplating the scene I have tried to describe, a cannon, fired by the fort, and answered by the vessel, announced an approaching funeral. There was a soft shower, or rather heavy mist, which made every thing look fresh, but sad. Wreaths of thin clouds came down on the mountains, as if they too wore the veil of sorrow. The procession came out with muffled drums, and fifes playing a dead march. A fine youth, intimate with the deceased, and much about his age, walked as chief mourner, and seemed greatly affected: so was every creature. You can't think how touching it was to see a funeral, where every individual seemed sunk in the deepest sorrow. The mournful musick, echoed by the rocks, followed the winding of the Tarffe till they reached the grave. I was chilled when the solemn pause ensued; and, when the discharge of muskets announced the close of the ceremony, I felt as if I were suddenly left alone,—such is the effect of

scenery and musick. Not that entirely, either; but, from having heard, besides, every one in the place agitated by hopes and fears about the deceased ever since we came here. He was the only son of a person in some employment about the royal household. A strong passion for a military life induced him to enter the regiment, quartered here last winter, as ensign. The superior officer, to whose charge he was entrusted, leaving the place the day before we came, his *protegé* went to see him over Corryarick. The captain, on parting with his young friend, discharged his musket, forgetting it had small shot in it: the young man's knee was shattered; he was carried back, and the amputation found necessary seemed, at first, successful. Sunday night, however, when all was thought secure, the bandages loosened, and he bled to death. He was so much beloved and pitied, that the operation and progress of the cure was every one's theme. I heard nothing through my vocal floor, but how Taafe was,* and what Taafe said, and eulogiums, and regrets. Nobody is so lamented in town, because there people do not think long on any one thing. Adieu. Night will seem long and dismal; but I can write no more.

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 * Ensign Taafe of the 43d, whose father was Upholsterer to his Majesty.

LETTER XX.

TO COLLECTOR MACVICAR, OBAN.

Fort Augustus, June 20, 1773.

I AM sure, my dear Sir, you will incline to think me as mad as my hero, though you do not exactly say so. I suspect he was no favourite with Duke Archibald; whose opinions I suppose you respected many years ago, as I do yours now. I think, when you and he joined counsels about removing poor old Inverary, it was a very *Czarish* plan; and I fear it will soon be put in execution. If I had great ancestors, my domains would have a very grotesque appearance; for so much would my reverence for antiquity combat my love of elegance, that I would not willingly remove a stone from the buildings they had reared.

I expect a kind and favourable answer to the intercessions in my last. I touch, with a trembling hand, on a subject so delicate; and would not touch it at all, if I were not pretty confident of assistance from an advocate in your own breast. In the mean time I will hope the best, and endeavour to pursue Oliver Cromwell through all his crooked paths. I have gone but a short way, my attention having been completely engrossed by a book that has bewitched me for the time; 'tis the Vicar of Wakefield, which you must certainly read. Goldsmith puts one in mind of Shak-

speare ; his narrative is improbable and absurd in many instances, yet all his characters do and say so exactly what might be supposed of them, if so circumstanced, that you willingly resign your mind to the sway of this pleasing enchant-er ; laugh heartily at improbable incidents, and weep bitterly for impossible distresses. But his personages have all so much nature about them ! Keep your gravity if you can, when Moses is going to market with the colt, in his waistcoat of gosling-green ; when the Vicar's family make the notable procession on Blackberry and his companion ; or when the fine ladies dazzle the Flam-boroughs with taste, Shakspeare and the musical glasses ; not to mention the polemical triumphs of that redoubted monagamist the Vicar. 'Tis a thousand pities Goldsmith had not patience, or art, to conclude suitably a story so happily conducted ; but the closing events rush on so precipitately, are managed with so little skill, and wound up in such a hurried and really bungling manner, that you seem hastily awaked from an affecting dream. Then miseries are heaped on the poor Vicar with such barbarous profusion, that the imagination, weary of such cruel tyranny, ends it, by breaking the illusion. I have too much indeed, anticipated your own observations ; but my intention was to awake your curiosity, that you might share the pleasure this artless tale has afforded me.—To quit the flowery paths of ingenious fiction for the thorny maze in which I am slowly ad-

vancing, is no pleasing transition to female fancy. I make it the more reluctantly, as I have not yet duly considered the character I am pursuing. While he mounts the dizzy crags of ambition, by ways untried before, which he does not seem to have premeditated, I gaze with wonder, heightened by perplexity; trying, but vainly trying, to discover at what exact time he ceased to have at heart the publick good, and that which he thought to be the interests of religion.

You see I take it for granted, he was sincere at first; and am the more convinced of this, as nothing could be more natural than the first steps of his progress. His early transition from a libertine to an enthusiast, is by no means wonderful. If a rash, impetuous libertine becomes at all devout, the same headlong fervour that hurried him down the precipice of vice, will animate him on his return to virtue. He will feel a more eager aspiration after superior attainments in spiritual improvement, than those who have not been misled, and a revolting horror at the allurements of vice, and all the delusions from whose power he has escaped. Hurrying as fast as possible to the opposite extreme, his speed will naturally kindle enthusiasm. This appears to have been precisely Cromwell's case at his outset.

The rigour of Laud soured him into a bigot. The vehement and declamatory style of preaching, which prevailed among his sect, heated him into a fanatick. When temporal views, mingling

with spiritual, awaked the spark of ambition which lay hid under the specious pretence of zeal for reformation, hypocrisy began to take its turn to reign. It would be tedious and difficult to trace his progress ; yet, marking these changes and gradations in his case, and that of others, would be no useless task. It would help us to a solution of many historical doubts, which, probably, became such by an impatience in writers to decide on the motives of actions, without developing the process of opinion ; to cut, in short, the knot they would not take time to untie. It is certainly invidious, as well as injudicious, to brand all those with the stigma of hypocrisy, who were, by the opposition and clashing of parties, the stream of popular prejudices, and the tumult of popular commotions, hurried far beyond their intentions, and involved in a mass, from which there was no possible means of separating.

When we find him, who was not unjustly stigmatized as the arch-hypocrite of his day, sincerely pious at one period ; we must learn that (when it is so necessary at different stages of life, and under different circumstances, to distinguish the same man from his former self) it becomes still more necessary, for the purpose of tracing back the causes and weighing the consequences of actions, that we should attend to the distinction of character among those who, though very different in their views, are, by slight observers, considered as one class. For instance, those who,

having little piety themselves, are not aware of its different effects on the minds of others, are very apt to confound all enthusiasts with bigots. Now an enthusiast sees the bright side of all objects. Except in one of those occasional fits of despondency, which are the common portion of morbid sensibility, his ardent mind gives a bright colouring to all things connected with the object of his desires and contemplations. He is highly benevolent, because the common state of depravity, and the common refuge of hope in an only Redeemer, form a strong tie betwixt him and those who have already, or may hereafter, become penitent like him :

“ These share the joy that faith and hope supply.”
Enthusiasm in devotion is thus perfectly compatible with cheerfulness of temper, and with the utmost liberality and good-will to all who worship the same God, more particularly those who hold their salvation by the same charter. We may perceive, by a little observation of characters which we are well acquainted with, that bigotry, so often confounded with enthusiasm, is very unlike, indeed often opposite to it : it is a species of self-deception in those who substitute a strong attachment to certain peculiar opinions, with regard to the ordinances of the Divinity, for a love of his essence ; and they mistake a certain vanity in exercising their faculties upon polemical subjects, for a delight in contemplating the divine perfections. A bigot may be (indeed often is) as

sincere as an enthusiast; but his views do not tend to meliorate his temper, or enlarge his heart; they have rather the direct contrary effect. The transition from a bigot to a hypocrite is not necessary nor common, in ordinary circumstances. Yet a person who idolizes his opinions cannot abound in charity; and he who does not love God well enough to love even his defaced and degraded image for his sake, is certainly in greater danger of being misled by self-interest, into a dereliction of his principles, than those whose hearts are warmed and expanded by their devotion. He may insensibly be led to cherish a degree of spiritual pride, teaching him to impose on others (and even on himself, if that were possible) austerity of manners and outward observances, for that religion "which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated." In many instances, it would be the greatest presumption in any human being to say where bigotry ended, and hypocrisy began.

You may observe instances of Cromwell's leaders, especially those who commanded in Ireland, and executed what they called divine vengeance against the catholick garrisons, perpetrating such deeds of cruelty as human nature shudders at. Yet, so thoroughly satisfied were these men, that they were acting according to conscience, that they not only lived a self-denied and pious life ever after, but closed the scene on the scaffold, (upon the change of government) with serenity;

professing their dependence on the Divine mercy, full of concern for "having fallen short of the glory of God," as they expressed it, and "being unprofitable servants;" yet not feeling the least apparent compunction for cruelties acted and ordered by them.

All this is not mere digression, though it may seem so; for if one did not read the history of that age of wonders with some attention to the shades and degrees of guilt, that were forced upon some by the rushing cataract of furious party zeal in their associates, and which others slid into when once they departed in a slight degree from the unvarying path of rectitude, to do evil that good might come of it; if one did not attend to the gradations by which certain characters sunk in value and efficacy, and thus gave room to unprincipled individuals of the same party to take the lead; one should shrink back with horror from human nature itself, wearing such a deformed and disastrous aspect. The opposite parties, too, were too much exasperated to speak with truth and candour of each other. Yet even those barbarous factions, while they broke down restraints, so as to shew the human heart in its utmost deformity and depravity, produced many virtues, elicited much bravery, fidelity, and true patriotism, that would otherwise never have been roused into action. All this is not Cromwell. I have tired your patience, and my own, with this long letter; I shall therefore defer my opinion of him

to another, which you must encourage me to write to you. I must only say at present, that I am not over-dazzled by his abilities: his was a life of contingencies, made or patched up out of the fragments of other people's broken systems; he lay on the watch for casual advantages, snatched them from friends and foes, and pursued them to the utmost. This, a man of plan or system could not have done. When he had converted his warmest friends into his bitterest enemies, his only hope of impunity was, by climbing up out of their reach. In his elevation he found his only safety; but the wretchedness of that elevation, the misery of ruling by cruel and incessant expedients, and living in perpetual dread, and dying at last of ceaseless and secret perturbations, afford a still stronger lesson against

“Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself,”
than even that awful one which history and poetry have blended their powers to impress, in the instructive scenes of Macbeth. I have, as usual, wandered, but my hope and intention, dear Sir, is to amuse you; and that, perhaps, I may do as much by the starts and excursions of an unformed mind, as by methodically and consequentially detailing opinions not worthy your attention. I hope this will find your domestick peace established, and your mind reconciled to those evils which wisdom cannot prevent; though virtue, and, above all, that rarest virtue, patience, may convert them into blessings. Not a word more about

Cromwell, till you tell me how I acquit myself in the untried region of criticism.

I am always,
with great esteem and deference,
Your obedient servant.

LETTER XXI.

TO COLLECTOR MACVICAR.

Fort Augustus, June 30, 1773.

I REALLY cannot determine whether you, my dear Sir, are amusing yourself with harmless raillery at the expense of your too presumptuous correspondent, or, whether you mix serious opinions with a little grave irony. As I feel myself very unequal to meet you upon the ground of raillery, I shall willingly take it for granted, that you are "quite serious," and as seriously comply with your requisition. In short, I will endeavour to point out the sources whence this "premature information and reflection has been derived." Spirit of Biography! (Muse of Biography! methinks I should rather say) on what calm elevation dost thou reside, surrounded by the powers of just discrimination, candid discussion, and true delineation?—Could I trace thy abode far, far beyond the clouds of passion, and mists of prejudice, I would invoke thy assistance

to pourtray a faint sketch of the useful and happy life, the estimable and singular character of the friend of my childhood, the instructress of my youth, and the existing model, in my mind, of the highest practical virtue. Madam, or Aunt Schuyler, then, for so, by universal consent, she was indiscriminately called, in the province of New-York, was daughter to one of the first and most respectable characters existing in that province, when it fell under the dominion of the English. His name was Cuyler, and his descendants are still numerous and prosperous in that country, to which prosperity my friend's wisdom and goodness contributed not a little. This Cuyler was the person who brought over the four Mohawk kings, who were mentioned by the Spectator as exciting so much wonder in England. He was introduced to Queen Anne, and had several conversations with her. She offered to knight him, but he refused, not choosing an elevation unusual in that country, which would make an invidious distinction betwixt him and his friends. Some years after his return, his daughter Catalina, then about eighteen, was married to Colonel Schuyler, who possessed an estate above Albany, in the direction which led to the vicinity of the French and hostile Indians. He was a person whose calm, temperate wisdom, singular probity, and thorough knowledge of the affairs and interests of the bordering nations, had given him a very great influence, not only in his own province, but among

the Indians and Canadian French, whose respective languages he spoke fluently. He was wealthy, and very generous, and so publick-spirited, that though he did all in his power to prevent war, being, in fact, a

“ Lover of peace, and friend of human kind ;”

yet, when he saw it inevitable, he raised a regiment at his own expense, and was the first who gave character or energy to the provincial troops. To detail instances of publick virtue in this truly great and good man, would, in fact, be giving the history of the province during his lifetime. From the place where he lived, he stood, as it were, a barrier between the Indians and the inhabitants. Of high and distinguished utility was this mild, philosophick, and Christian character ; yet, unless he had met a congenial mind, he could neither have done so much good, nor prevented so much evil. Luckily for the publick, they had no family ; therefore, greatly resembling each other, both in taste, and inclination, and intellectual powers, their efforts were all directed one way. At that time there were not many settlers in the province who were acquainted with the English language ; and these generally entertained a rooted prejudice, nay aversion, to the very army which came to protect them. In the hospitality, intelligence, and pleasing conversation of this very worthy pair, these officers always found a refuge ; from them they met with a cordial kindness, sound advice, and useful information. Petty and

crooked policy was unknown in this patriarchal family, where a succession of adopted children, judiciously educated, and a number of domestick slaves, very kindly and tenderly treated, formed a happy community, who were directed with such prudence, that they left leisure to their rulers for beneficence still more widely diffused, and for studies of the most useful nature. Their acquaintance with elegant literature was, perhaps, not very extensive ; the Spectator, the tragedy of Cato, and the works of Milton and Young, being the only books I remember to have met with, exclusive of history, biography, and memoirs : of these, indeed, there was a very ample collection, which had been carefully read, and thoroughly digested, by the owners ; and which not only furnished very frequently matter of conversation, but materials for reflection, and for that system of policy by which their plans were regulated. They had three objects in view, besides the great primary one of making their large family as good, and wise, and happy as possible : the first was, to prevent injustice being done to the Indians, to conciliate their affections, and to meliorate their condition ; the second, to alleviate the hardships and difficulties to which the British troops were exposed, from marching into unknown wildernesses, by receiving them into their family, making them acquainted with the nature of the country, and the manner of managing the stubborn tempers of the boorish inhabitants, avoiding am-

bushes, and reconciling Indian nations to our government. On these occasions, they would accommodate in the house, those officers, whose morals and manners recommended them most, and allow the parties of soldiers, as they passed, a lodging in their offices, and an abundant supply of milk and vegetables. The third object to which their wisdom and humanity were directed was, the protection and comfort of new settlers, on their neighbouring boundary, to whom they were ever ready to extend a helping hand, both in the way of advice and assistance. Indeed, so well did they understand the interests and defence of that growing colony, and the important frontier on which they lived, that every new governor always came up to consult them, and no publick measure was thought safe till the Colonel approved of it. In the mean time, their house was an academy for morals, for manners, and for solid knowledge. There the best company was always to be met ; there the most important topicks were discussed, dispassionately and fully ; there conversation, properly so called, was cultivated, and tasted. The little embellishments and elegancies of life, perhaps, had no great share in these discussions ; but she,

“ Whose mind was moral as the preacher’s tongue,

“ And strong, to wield all science worth the name,”

was well skilled in the holy scriptures, and intimately acquainted with the writings of the best divines and historians. I say she, for the Colonel

died before I knew her, after they had lived forty years together, in unexampled happiness ; and reared (from the time of their being weaned, till they married, or launched out into active life) fifteen nieces, nephews, or other relatives, several of whom have since been distinguished, both for their merit and their uncommon success in various pursuits. Soon after the death of her lamented partner, Madam Schuyler removed to the town of Albany, that she might more freely enjoy her choice of society,—people, whom experience in the world, or superior attainments, made suitable associates for a mind so sound and so enlightened. Her husband had left her all his possessions. The use she made of her wealth was to keep a kind of open table for strangers who were in any respect worthy of admittance ; and to educate, in succession, the children of different relations of her beloved consort. Many particulars, relative to this excellent person's life and manners, would be well worth preserving ; and, if I outlive her, (for I hope she still does live,) I think I shall, some time or other, endeavour to please myself at least, by preserving a memoir of a life so valuable and exemplary. But to the point ; In the eighth year of my age, we removed from the fort, to make room for some other regiment. Lodging next this good lady in town, I took a great fancy to a beautiful child, a relation whom she was bringing up in the house ; and my father attracted Madam Schuyler's notice by his piety, not very frequently

a distinguishing feature in the military character. I will not tire you with the detail of all the little circumstances that gradually acquired me the place in her favour which I ever continued to possess. She saw me reading *Paradise Lost* with delighted attention ; she was astonished to see a child take pleasure in such a book, and no less so to observe, that I loved to sit thoughtful by her, and hear the conversations of elderly and grave people.

My father, on leaving the army, took a small farm of her's ; she still grew more attached to me, and I lived with her for two winters. She professed a desire to keep me entirely, if my parents would part with me. I was admitted to the honour of being her constant companion, slept in her room, and was entertained with many interesting details, which to hear did I, like *Desdemona*, " seriously incline," and she was gratified with my attention. Whatever culture my mind has received I owe to her. Beyond the knowledge of my first duties I should scarce have proceeded, or rather, I should have become almost savage, in a retreat which precluded me from the advantages of society, as well as those of education. It is now three years since I have heard of her. When we left her, the discontents against the mother-country were daily on the increase. Her influence, which was very considerable, was all thrown into the opposite scale. I fear her latter days will be darkened by that disaffection to the

parent state, which she always dreaded would become the consequence of peace and security.— Now, dear Sir, you have traced all this premature reflection to its true and veritable source ; and you will possibly call it parrotism ; nay, what is more, and worse, you will possibly not be far mistaken.

Adieu ! dear Sir. Thank me for making known to you a mind worthy of your own ; whose place you have in some degree supplied to

Your attached and grateful, &c. &c.

LETTER XXII.

TO MI S. REID.

Fort Augustus, June 31, 1773.

I HOPE you are now satisfied with my diligent and unwearied endeavours to amuse you, and make you present here as much as possible. I don't know as to the worth of the people. They certainly take a great deal too much pleasure in turning each other into ridicule ; one is greatly amused ; but I don't know that we ought to indulge such amusement.

I wish you saw how gay and pleasing summer looks here now, but no one will admire it with me, and delight, as I do, in seeing nature unmasked and unfettered. I feel my mind rise to a kind of melancholy greatness, when I contemplate these

scenes, particularly by moonlight ; but I think I should rejoice *once more* if I met with one that tasted all this as I do. I am seized with longings for you all that are very painful ; nobody will care for me here, because nobody will understand me. I cannot blame them. I am too rustick, too simple at least, for people of the world, with whom manner is every thing ; and though myself uneducated, I painfully feel I have too much refinement, too much delicacy for uninformed people, with whom I feel no point of union but simplicity. 'Tis pity there are no hermitesses ; I should just now like to be one. All the spirit that diverted you in my description of our garrisonians, is evaporated. They are diverting originals, but their restlessness and discontent provoke me. Military people always speak with pleasure of the place where they have been, or where they are going, but never are satisfied where they are. One sees them too near here. They are generally well-bred, and entertaining, but often hard, and heartless at bottom ; and always arbitrary in their families, when they have them. They rail constantly at this place, yet, perhaps, they will never be so happy when they leave it. I would rather be a beetle under a stone, than a dragon fly, blown with every blast.—Good night ; I am peevish, but not at you, spirit of truth and gentleness !

“ Meek nature’s child, again adieu !”

LETTER XXIII.

TO MISS OURRY (NOW MRS. F——R.)

Fort Augustus, May 24, 1774.

YOU see I have lost no time in complying with your most agreeable proposal. Yes, my beloved sister, let us, solitary beings as we are, in our respective families, supply that endearing relation to each other. You have only anticipated me, for the thought was my own. Of course you had a right to it. Kindred and united minds like ours should surely maintain a closer intercourse than we have hitherto had it in our power to do. Our separation has made us experience the mournful solitude of the heart, "the craving void left aching in the breast," occasioned by the want of that luxury of affection, imagination, and intelligence, which we have so long shared together. The beautiful caves at Inchnacardach, the wild hanging gardens of Glendoe, and the echoing glen by the waterfall at Culachy, restore your image to my solitary musings, only to make me feel your loss the more. Never will any one enjoy these scenes with me as you have done. Never was the true, the genuine love of nature, so strong, in a person bred in the very midst of that society that was, most of all, estranged from it. Can you ever forget the sweet summer evening, behind the great white rose bush, when we first found

each other out ? Sacred for ever be the hour to virtue and to friendship ! The smile of nature brightening every object round that enchanting garden ; the full sonorous murmur of the Oich over its fantastick gravelly shores ; and the thrush's vesper hymn from Thicket Island, so near, so inaccessible, and so attractive, all opened and soothed our minds, and half an hour did as much, as half an age would have done in any other place ; opened our hearts, and made us know we were worthy to mingle them. Sure, if we have guardian angels, they must have smiled together on an union productive of such innocent felicity ; may I not add, useful improvement ? How sadly I look at eight on the glaxis, where we used to spend the full hour from that to nine, in convoying and reconvoying each other. These tender recollections are indeed " pleasant yet mournful to the soul." I cannot complain much of solitude in the strict sense of the word ; we are now become acquainted with our neighbours all around, and see them often. You know what a wide word neighbourhood is in this thin peopled country. Beside, we are all now tamed and softened, and live on such a good footing with each other, that we are *like young lambkins sporting in a green meadow*, as your antiquated friend expressed it. I, never being used to see much company, particularly fine company, have nothing to complain of on that score ; but, O ! my Nancy, ask your own heart what pleasure mine finds in

the society of common acquaintances, selfish, superficial, and possibly deceitful. Christina Macpherson stands a worthy exception to this general character, which you will easily perceive to be the drawing of chagrin. Yet her sound understanding and steady attachment, though valuable in themselves, cannot supply the place of the numberless, nameless, links by which our minds were connected; those conversations where perfect freedom, without the least tincture of rude familiarity, unveiled the inmost thoughts of our hearts, which must be depraved and degenerated, before our mutual affection can be abated, far less extinguished. I know not where I am wandering, but I meant to tell you, that there are a thousand things which occur in the course of my reading and observation, to delight and interest me, of which she has no idea; for this, she is not to blame, but I am to be pified. Were it not for the correspondence I keep up with you and my dear Harriet, I should find this exile gloomy indeed. Yet, though I feel unwilling to submit to its wholesome bitterness, my reason informs me that even this exile has its advantages, considered in one point of view. Your penetration enabled you to discover in my mind a strange mixture of wild enthusiasm of imagination, with indolent tranquillity of temper. The retired manner in which I have been brought up, equally remote from the refined artifice of higher life, and the necessary activity and confined notions of the mob,

have nourished my peculiarities. So has the little company I have kept ; these were mostly of the same primitive cast, and lay under the same disadvantages of being equally unfit for vulgar and what the world calls elegant society. The mournful event* to which you are no stranger, blasting the flattering picture of felicity which my heart had too fondly indulged, fixed in my mind a cast of pensive thought, which has been alternately sustained by the tenderness of friendship, and the reveries of solitude ; so that I am now neither fit for any other situation nor desirous of a change, lest it should prove

“ A bitter change—severer for severe.”

* * * * *

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If heaven should favour our ardent wishes of once more meeting, I hope the change will not be a disadvantageous one. I should value your society more than ever, now I know what it is to be deprived of that or any other suitable to my taste. Whatever change a necessary habit of prudence and reserve may have made on my manners, you will find my heart the same, and we shall meet as if we parted yesterday : my soul foretells that this meeting, and all we have seen since we parted, will only make us value each other the more.

I wish we were once more together, with the

.....
* The death of a young friend !

privilege of teasing poor *Fungy*, by affecting learning, and mis-pronouncing hard words. What a dilemma his desire of appearing gallant and well bred, combining with his real hatred for the sex, used to reduce him to ! He might have furnished a new character for a comedy. Shall we never more hold him in chace, through the windings of the zig-zag road, where he used to pant before us like another Falstaff, little knowing that we only wished to frighten him. I have often smiled by myself at the recollection of our industry in tormenting him, and never hear a hard word murdered but what a *crowned cat in a nation of ideas* * brings him into my head. I was so much entertained by your lively and humorous description of your place of residence and its inhabitants, that I could not resist reading a part of it to my father, who was quite charmed with it, and, having taken his tour of duty through many parts of Ireland, is the better qualified to judge of the verisimilitude of your description. Vanity has her votaries every where ; but on the Hibernian shore, she is more devoutly worshipped than any saint of the country. She holds the place there which pride does here : I don't know how to strike the balance. Vanity is in better humour, but pride tells fewer lies. The first is more pleasing, the latter safer. May the dominion of

.....
 * Concatenation of ideas : a word invented to tease Captain D'Arippe, of the 15th, who of all things dreaded female pedants.

either be far from our peaceful bosoms. I conclude this letter of declamation, by telling you it shall be directly followed by one of faithful narration, giving you a brief history of this little epitome of the great world you are ranging through. Short may your eccentric course prove. If I were a star, I should like to be a fixed one. Be you in the mean time my guiding planet, and shed sweet influence on your unaltered friend.

LETTER XXIV.

TO MISS OURRY.

Fort Augustus, March 10, 1775.

MY DEAREST,

YOURS came just in time to relieve my anxiety, and prevent me from absolutely despairing of ever hearing more from you. Need I tell you my uneasiness, or how I rejoiced on receiving another proof of your continued love? My pleasure changed too soon to melancholy, when I understood the dreadful dilemma you are all in about this American voyage, which impends too surely over you : I had indeed heard that the 15th were under orders for America, but did not dream of Captain Ourry's accompanying them ; and I examined every newspaper in hopes of finding his name changed, or sold out. How grieved and surprised was I to hear that he is in danger of

being once more torn from the embraces of a family so dear to him, who have already spent so many tedious years in lamenting his absence, and this to plunge into the most cruel and horrid of wars; whose most desirable event can be only that of successfully devastating with bloodshed and destruction a country, late the most peaceful and happy on earth, but never, never to be happy more, end this as it may. The cup was too full to hold, yet I did not think it would be spilt thus rudely. How dear must victory be bought with the lives of our fellow subjects and former friends! But I will no longer torment myself or you, with giving vent to all the sad reflections arising from this most painful subject. Yet why were you not more distinct and particular? Alas! I fear all our prayers and hopes for the desired reconciliation, will prove fruitless. The divine justice seems about to display itself in taking signal vengeance on the iniquities of the times. The corruption of the parent state, which leads her to an inordinate enjoyment of those advantages, that she possesses in pre-eminence of all others, and her ungrateful neglect of the source of all those blessings, seems arrived at its height; and will be requited by the ingratitude of those colonies which owe their existence to her. There was a time when such a half-moral, half-political harangue from your friend would have made you laugh; but now fatal necessity urges us to take more than a common share in the publick calam-

ity—calamity how heavy, and how general, when we, who, in the sequestered vale of life, might be supposed exempted from any other share than the tribute which humanity pays to the woes of human kind, are forced for those dearest to us to have our hearts wrung with anguish hitherto unknown! I deeply sympathize with your sufferings, on account of the worthy Captain's illness, and that of your good mother. Alas! my dear girl, we were sisters by sentiment and inclination before, but now I may hail you as a sister sufferer. You have met, or are likely to meet, with the train of sorrows that have obscured the morning of my youth. These I account salutary drops of bitterness thrown into my cup, lest the tranquil easiness of my temper, and that range of imagination which furnishes me with a boundless store of ideal pleasures, should raise my enjoyment of life beyond what is destined for this imperfect state. You will too feelingly trace the resemblance which I allude to; the daily sufferings and broken spirits of a beloved parent, bursting asunder the tenderest ties of affection, and hurrying me away, far, very far, from those whose presence was life and joy to me! I hope you will not finish the resemblance, by being forced to cross the Atlantick with the same desponding reluctance which hung upon the spirits of your friend on a similar occasion. Never shall I forget the emotion with which I saw the Cape of Neversink melt into air; when I bade the last

farewell to the dear loved coast of America, which I am now certain I shall never more behold. My dear friends were beginning to be persecuted for their loyalty, before we came away, for even then the storm began to lower.—Poor lost Letch ! * his kingdom is not of this world, that is evident. What a crush to the spirit of a young soldier, to be forced to forsake a profession he was so attached to, at the very time that military merit had the fairest chance for distinction and reward ! I wish you had given more particulars of his parting behaviour. I am glad he spoke so plainly, because it no doubt relieved his mind, and the assurance of your compassion and esteem, which was all he could reasonably hope, would be so consoling to him. You will think my expectations romantick, as usual, but still I will hope our friend Henry has embraced the only profession he is fitted for. The zealous fervour of his attachments, his glowing admiration of superior excellence, and the ardour of his conceptions, will find adequate objects, where the affections of his heart, and services of his future life, will, I trust, be dedicated. How happy those whom the

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* Henry Letch was the son of a physician, of the same name, in Mark Lane. He was sent very early into the army, full of romantick prejudices, which led him into boundless profusion and endless errors. With great purity of heart, and uprightness of intention, he very early dissipated his patrimony, and soon after was so much in debt as to be obliged to sell his commission, about the period when this letter was written.

storms of life drive so early to their best, their final harbour! That abhorrence of vice which would be a continual source of vexation, in struggling through the scenes of active life, will be very well suited to the duties of a pastor; besides, the emphatick eloquence which makes every word of our poor friend so interesting, will be peculiarly suited to the pulpit. How many new things have I to tell you of? A new cousin, whom I am much pleased with. He has learning, taste, and understanding. I find him in many respects very congenial with my disposition. Then we have got a new church, built by subscription, mind, that it would do your heart good to see, and your soul good to hear sermon in:—poor Mrs. Brown! how much sympathy she claims. My old play-fellow George is now doing penance at Boston. We have been quite animated all summer, with flocks of wild geese from your country. Lament with me, for we have had another ship load of emigrants, marching off to their Chaldea, for such I know it will appear to them. I have a good mind to pray for a heart of stone. Your old friend, the Honourable Captain Murray,* commands the invalids here, and passed the summer amongst us. He is more helpless than you saw him, but has still equal spirits, and amiable manners. We often conversed about you, and he begs you

.....
 * William Murray, brother to the Earl of Dunmore; who had formerly resided near Captain Ourry, and was intimately known to that family.

may not forget him. Mr. G. left us last week to be settled in Badenoch. Our parting was—almost affecting - - - - - he was proud of your notice and remembrance, and begs me to assure you of his cordial good wishes.

* * * * *

Pray write immediately on receipt of this. Stay at home one night from your Hibernian Ranelagh, and renounce noise and head-ach to gratify your friend. Pray explain yourself about being sick of elegance. I don't remember teasing you about the word; but my out of the world education, and primitive notions, and almost savage simplicity of taste, made yours seem to me to border on false refinement. I triumph in your confession, having always assured myself that your native sensibility and ripened judgment would lead you back to the paths of nature and of truth. Then you will fully relish that chaste and sublime simplicity in style, in manners, and in sentiment, which delights the untutored mind. Your change of taste will shew you many things, which you once thought eccentric, in a very different light. Tell the captain and his lady I rejoice in their kind remembrance of me, and shall never forget them. Friend Henry too shall be remembered with all his imperfections on his head. Adieu! I shall always be very tenderly your sister and friend.

LETTER XXV.

TO MISS OURRY.

Fort Augustus, May 26, 1775.

TO rejoin—I can the better comprehend your *pair of ducks*, as we have now in the garrison a couple (not a pair) who are newly arrived from Ireland, and always talk with fond regret of Dublin, as the centre of all their joys: They have so much external and superficial elegance, and so little of that refinement of sentiment and manners which emanates from the heart, that I never see them without thinking of your new acquired friends. They are natives of this country, and have a singular history,

* * * * *

They are fond of company without real hospitality, or the least regard for their guests, whom they look upon as merely implements to kill time with. They behave to each other with a kind of civility which seems rather a substitute for tenderness, than a proof of it. There is a negative merit which must be allowed to those well-bred people, who never offend or oblige you, but are satisfied with amusing and being amused. They are, perhaps, safer than people of mere virtue, who have quicker feelings and more earnestness. They have neither acrimony enough to feel quick

disgust at vice and folly, nor benevolence to be delighted with the excellencies of God's creatures. They neither love nor hate cordially, but just consider people as cards to play with. Now I can't endure to be a card, since I can't aspire at being queen of hearts. Yet if you knew how eagerly I set about gardening, and how stoutly I laboured at transplanting, you would be apt to call me queen of spades. I have dwelt thus minutely on these characters, as I think them a sample or counterparts of those you daily meet with. I am sorry the general rage for dissipation, and your indignant feelings at it, should lead you to think your mind contracted ;

" I do not think my sister so to seek

" And so unprincipled in virtue's book,

" And that calm peace which goodness bosoms ever,"

as to suffer the depravity which prevails around her to produce any lasting sentiment, but pity, which must indeed on some occasions be mingled with contempt. Whatever you say in a momentary heat, I am sure your good sense and kindly affections will preserve you from a gloomy disgust at human nature, on account of the vice and absurdity of individuals, to whose nature it belongs to rush into full display, while the pious, the modest, and the good, serve God and their fellow-creatures in quiet obscurity.

When we forsake the paths of nature and simplicity, in a restless pursuit of amusement, vanity and ostentation generally take the lead of all the

passions. That principle which leads the human mind so eagerly to desire the approbation of its fellow-mortals, was certainly placed within us as a spur, not only to the desire, but to the attainment of applause ; and if people applauded only what was right, it might answer noble purposes. But, alas ! when conscious we no longer deserve esteem, we grasp at admiration, and endeavour to conceal our wants of real happiness and self-enjoyment, under the veil of external gaiety and artificial mirth. The glossy varnish of politeness, which, like the skin of a snake, though bright and pleasing to the view, is cold and slippery to the touch, we are taught to substitute for the lively glow and artless tenderness of true benevolence. Be merciful even to the perversion of Irish hospitality. Excess of good nature first makes them wretched, and then necessity makes them cunning. To be truly and austere good among such a “perverse and crooked generation,” requires the resolution of a confessor at least. But you must at all events preserve your charity, were it but to guard the purity of your own heart.

Occasional solitude is a blessing which every well regulated mind would long for, if deprived of that privilege. Remember what our favourite Young says of

“ Our reason, guardian angel and our God.”

I have a particular pleasure in reading the pencil-marked lines that we compared together. I wish we could read some more chosen books in that

way, whenever we meet, as meet we shall, I trust :—we may then have the satisfaction of tracing the similarity of our respective tastes. You desire a history of the garrison, but so bad a newsmonger and narrator am I, that unless I go through it *à la militaire*, somewhat in the order of the muster-roll, I shall lose myself. The *prime personage* then remains much as you left him ; if any thing, he mends ; stays more at home, and is content to pry less. But whether this be reformation or decline, this deponent saith not. G.'s good nature and salt-water wit continue to grow and prosper. He will never want a butt while we have a ruler. I have a notion I, too, furnish one occasionally ; but it is wit without valour, for his is always an absent butt. I have one way of keeping these gentry in order ; I can see they dread my contempt. Now, next to being loved, the best thing is to be feared ; and when people know you incapable of meanness and deceit, depend upon it they will fear you. Mrs. N. is still the alternate prey of doubts and despondency : you would pity her if you knew half what she suffers. Yet who can imagine it better than you, by what you saw your own mother suffer in the like situation. To be sure Mrs. N.'s feelings are on no occasion very lively ; yet, though we children of fancy suffer more than others, both have many consolations. Besides the sympathy of friendship, and the ardour of hope, we build the prettiest castles imaginable, tenant them with courteous

knights and virtuous dames, and then sit, rent-free, in these airy dwellings. Mrs. N. seldom hears of her husband ; he is prisoner somewhere on the frontier of Pennsylvania. - - - - - Now I hope I have made the whole garrison known to you. Our new Surgeon is an original, whom I would wish you to know, but I have not colours wherewith to paint him. He was very stiff and pedantick, but that begins to wear off. He is, I dare say, well principled ; but, though he has solid learning, I believe, and very sound sense I am sure,—he has neither fancy nor feeling, and has the presumption to laugh at sentiment ; you may believe I grow very angry, and attempt to be severe, and then he rallies me about morbid sensibility, as he calls it. He is very provoking, and quite incorrigible. I always tell him he will meet an Iphigenia somewhere.* Remember me respectfully to your father and mother, and kindly to every one you think has any kindness for me. Adieu, dearest Nancy ! only sister—beloved friend. Farewell.

Tom cat is well, and lives in clover,
 But Perry's harmless life is over :
 To tell you that he died quite mad,
 Will melt your heart and make you sad :
 But when you know he sleeps in peace,
 Methinks your grief, like mine, should cease.

.....
 * He is now happily married, and settled in Edinburgh ; is a particular friend of the Author's, and a valuable member of society.

LETTER XXVI.

TO MISS OURRY.

Fort Augustus, Feb. 15, 1776.

(The month of our nativity.)

MY dearest girl ! I most sincerely forgive your perplexing and mortifying silence, and most willingly attribute the chasm in our correspondence to any other motive than indifference, altogether inconsistent as it is with the sincerity and affection which form so great and distinguishing a part of your character. But now, that my forgiveness may be as sincere as I know your penitence to be, let me, with my accustomed freedom, warn you of the consequences of indulging that unfriendly indolence, less pardonable in your active, lively disposition, than in my easy and indolent one. I have admired this vivacity without envy, and am therefore entitled to reap the fruits of it. I was vain of your attainments, and always thought myself deficient of nothing which you possessed ; it was enough for me that we had them between us. This is digression—but I resume. In the present unsettled habits of your life, there is nothing you ought to be so careful of, as cherishing those friendships which have given you so much pleasure, and done you so much good in your earlier years ; for indeed, as

poor Pope said when he was dying, and saw things as they are, "There is nothing worth living for but virtue and friendship;" and friendship is a part of virtue. When the one withers, the other will droop. Friendship is the misletoe growing on the oak of virtue. I fancy when the Druids cut the misletoe with golden sickles, they had a kind of prescience of the dear and close ties that gold was destined in after ages to divide. Seriously, if the friendships that have formed the delight and comfort of the earlier stage of life were once extinguished in your breast, no later formed attachment would ever supply their loss. You will meet with many agreeable acquaintances in your *peregrinations*; nay, in the country where you are, you run a chance of being overwhelmed with civility by the one sex, and compliment by the other; but where will you find the playful innocence of——, the solid sense and rational attachment of——, or the sincere and constant affection of her whom you have thus long neglected? Yes, my dear sister, in the best sense of the word, sister of my heart, and of my vowed affection, if you allow trivial motives to estrange you from your friends, as their remembrance cannot die in your heart, it will only live to torment you. I could not endure to think of my friends when I could no longer think of them with pleasure. Any thing may be endured but remorse; 'tis the dreaded future punishment begun on earth. Sweetly mournful is the recollection of those with

whom and for whom we have lived in tender confidence and unity. Should they depart for ever, when we can look back blameless, in the midst of our sorrow, we are pleased with the consciousness that the sacred approbation of virtue consecrates the tender regret. Transient intimacies will never fill the gloomy vacuity which extinguished affections leave in the heart. Vainly, if that were the case, would you endeavour to fill the chasm in your mind with amusements ending in satiety and disgust. Now, in my turn, let me ask pardon for these transgressions on your patience ; be assured they are owing to the anxiety of a heart which, though fully convinced of your present regard, dreads few things so much as your future indifference. You would have gratified me by saying more about your new acquaintances and present employments. What have you been doing ? Your worked gown unfinished, all your friends neglected, and all this in a place so remote, and, by your own description, unsocial ! What will become of you in the hurry and dissipation of Dublin, if you contrive to be thus mysteriously engrossed on the banks of the notorious Shannon, which one might suppose to be the chosen retreat of dulness ? Yet, when I think of it, it is not lead, but brass, that people are said to acquire by plunging into it. Alas ! for our poor unhappy brother !* How afflicting is your history,

.....

* Henry Letch, who delighted to style himself our brother, was at an early age, with eleven other youths,

and yet how well we might foresee what has happened.

“Curse on his virtues, they’ve undone himself.”

But what is virtue, or can it indeed exist, without self-command, and self-denial? What avails to poor Henry, that he had no vicious propensities, when he has contrived his own ruin, and, what is much worse, rendered himself contemptible, by indulging inclinations tending to elegance and virtue, beyond all due bounds? This it is to be a mother’s darling, and to be Dr. Dodd’s pupil, and to skim the smooth surface of knowledge, and as Voltaire said of Rousseau, “To talk of virtue and philosophy, till no body shall know what virtue and philosophy is.”

Dearest Nancy, let this sad example teach us, to go higher than essays and novels, for our divinity and morality. These must be gathered with labour, and are worth the labour of gathering.—Now spirit of Lycurgus, and soul of Leonidas, and shade of king Agis,—and all other lacon-
.....

the children of wealthy parents, placed under the care of the too well known Dr. Dodd; and, in common with the rest, received very flimsy and superficial notions of morality and religion, and an extravagant taste for elegance and false refinements. He was fond of walking with us, reading to us, &c. And we hoped, betwixt reasoning and ridicule, to wean him from his absurdities—but to little purpose. Adversity, however, seemed to produce the desired effect. He took orders, and obtained some chaplaincy about Dublin Castle, and seemed to apply seriously to the duties of his function; but was, about the year 1778, cut off by the gaol fever, which he had caught by a voluntary attendance on sick prisoners.

ick powers ! assist me, to cram, and crowd, and crush together in a few pithy sentences, the narration of domestick transactions. Know, then, that after the dissolution and scatteration of last year's happy trio, another sprung up in its room, of which triangle I am the base, as you right worthily were of the former, Christina made one of the sides, and you easily guess the other. Well, for a time we rejoiced together with perfect harmony, being in such an easy, sauntering, playful humdrum way, that we all insensibly became more and more necessary to each other, because in fact we saw no great motive to care for any one else. However, this was too good to last. I found the thermometer rising too high in a certain point. I thought it was being too like the world to see what was right in my friend's cases only, and not practise it in my own, and so finally, I did what formerly I advised you to do ; and now, being very proud, we think it incumbent to be very sulky. But every nursery maid knows that the best cure for sulkiness is just—to let it alone. Adieu ! my dear friend ; tell those that remember me, that I never forget any one I ever cared for. I have a thousand good wishes to send you, which this paper cannot hold. Remember me, and set it in your tablets, or——my ghost will haunt you.

LETTER XXVII.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, June 5, 1778.

NOW, as you have my letter from Inverness, containing much weighty matter, it only remains to tell you, that I met my father, in the Governor's carriage, at the Fall of Fyers, vulgarly called the half-way house; and of joy there was abundance, which consoled me for parting in the morning with those dear creatures, Mr. and Mrs. Tod, and various other privations, one of which, though a fanciful, was to me a heavy one; for the delight I should have had in riding through the woods on the Loch side was so embittered by thoughts of how you would have enjoyed it; and then I was so teased with the affected rural taste of one of the Inverness beaux, who accompanied me, that I was tempted, like Phœbe's lover, in the song—To

“Cry Sirrah! and give him a blow with my crook,” as he did to his dog Tray, for fawning when his lovership was out of humour. Well, my father and I proceeded by ourselves, and, after much “fair discourse,” arrived by tea time, where I found Mrs. Newmarch and the Miss Campbells Duntroon waiting for me. I leave you to judge my feelings at meeting my dear mother, and find-

ing myself safely and happily arrived among a circle of kind friends.

We have had a visit from the new married couple, who are doubtless oddly matched. "Speak ye who can best tell," whether sons of light or not, and inform us how this woman came to take that man, who is a good creature too; but her refinement, and her prospects, and her brother ! She is the person whom Johnson mentions in his Tour, whom he met at Rasay, and again at her brother's house in the Isle of Sky. She looks much up to that surly sage, and receives letters and presents of books from him.

The eldest of the fair Argathelians is really astonishing for womanly appearance ; and I am told her genius, &c. I heard much of her at Perth. By all I hear and see, I have taken it in my head that she is a kind of female Quixote, but a very improvable subject ; and when she begins to know the importance of common duties, and the value of native elegance, and modest merit unaccompanied by talent ; when she discovers that there is something in the world worth loving, besides virtue mounted on stilts, and genius soaring among the clouds ; so benevolent a mind, brought down from these false elevations, may be the delight of her friends, and an ornament to society.

Here follows a list of worthies, to whom in my name you must say something tender, grateful, kind, and emphatick, according to the various

characters you address, beginning always with
Miss Pagan. * * * * *

* * * * * By
discharging these debts of love, you will make
me easy. Then shall the soul of your friend rest
in this *Limbus Patrum*, purifying and refining to
fit it for the society of those blessed, who inhabit
Clydeside, Cartside, and Kelvinside, and say their
prayers in the dear land of my nativity. Adieu,
collectively, ye worthies of Clydesdale? Fare-
well, individually, friend of my forlorn heart.

LETTER XXVIII.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, June 8, 1778.

* * * * *
* * * * * The joy of Christie's meeting and
mine passes description. Yet she is somehow
melancholy, and for this there is some cause.
She has too strong and steady a mind, and is too
constantly occupied to sink causeless. Her sis-
ter-in-law is, when in health, a well-bred, good-
humoured woman; but so nervous, and those
complaints recur so often, and are so fatal to the
peace, and to the temper, of those afflicted with
them, who are generally uneven and capricious;
in her case this only shews itself in sudden at-
tachments, and a great fondness for new favour-

ites, and prejudices against others at first sight. I am at present a great favourite, but no ways desirous of cultivating that favour. I am not in a humour for studying tempers ; the days are fast receding that saw me prone to admire, and to deck every one, merely tolerable, with a thousand fancied charms. Besides, I grew very deaf to the lamentations of those, who meet no person or thing that is right or upright. The new light that has flashed in on my mind, shows me that the evil lies often in the sweet sufferer's own downy bosom. Now I must not dismiss this "Sunbeam of the Isle of Mist," without telling you that she is formed like a nymph, moves like a grace, sings like a syren, and plays like a muse ; in short, if she wore a mask, we should expect an angel ; but, alas ! where the loves and smiles were wont to live so amicably together, and play at hide and seek in dimples, their arch foe, the small-pox, has exalted his repulsive trophies ; and sure never was victory so complete. Now here is enough of Culachy gossiping. But there are two new stars risen in our horizon, of whom I must say something. The eldest Miss C——, then, is a wonderful girl of her age, scarce sixteen, has a fine understanding, seems good hearted, and has a turn for reflection, which, properly directed, might be a source of improvement and advantage to her. But her mind seems to have been in a hot-bed ; every thing is premature beyond the simplicity natural to that age. I cannot develope her ; one

minute I think I know her, and the next she is out of sight : I am sure she does not wish to deceive me, but so young a philosopher may possibly deceive herself. In the meantime she is much inclined to muse and warble, and would have me tune a responsive lyre ; but her muse and mine are of a different family ; hers is in waiting from dawn to twilight, and moreover “ visits her nightly,” while my inspirations come “ Like angel visits, few and far between,” and have for some time ceased entirely. Two or three times short answers have been forced out of me, all deprecating further solicitation. I send you two very comely efforts of hers. One stanza of my last shall serve as a sample :

The leisure hour alone the Muse requires,
The still retreat to peace and virtue dear ;
From vulgar eyes conceals her sacred fires,
But calls on heaven, and heaven-taught souls
to hear.

But this hint is unavailing ; and so are all my attempts at reformation ; nothing indeed but woful experience can reclaim wilful wit, though its ways are not ways of pleasantness nor yet its paths peace. But it is a sad thing to want a mother, and be tost about among artificial characters, of whom I have seen so many, even in this retreat, that I sicken more and more for you and the other children of simplicity, in whom “ all my delights are placed.” Adieu, my daisy, my violet, my all that is native and genuine. Fondly adieu !

LETTER XXIX.

TO MISS JANE EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, July 1, 1778.

MY DEAR JANE,

NOW that I am settled, and have leisure to be angry, I am out of all patience at not hearing from any of you this age. I had letters by Perth only once since I arrived. As for my trunk, it has been so well treated by your cousin, that it still remains peaceably, though the carrier be arrived. What to do or say, I know not, and far less what to put on * * * * *

I lost a good conveyance for a letter, and that a letter to Lady Isabella, by going on a grand party of pleasure on the Loch. There was the Governor, and his new espoused love, who, by the by, is very well considering, frank and cheerful, and so forth; and there were the two Miss Campbells Duntroon, blithe bonny lasses; and there was the noble Admiral of the lake, and his fair sister; and the Doctor, and another beau, whom you have not the honour to know. We went on board our galley, which is a fine little vessel, with a commodious and elegant cabin.

The day was charming, the scene around was in itself sublime and cheerful, enlivened by sunshine and the musick of the birds, that answered each other loudly from the woody mountains on

each side of the Loch. On leaving the fort, we fired our swivels, and displayed our colours. On our arrival opposite Glenmoriston, we repeated this ceremony, and sent out our boat for as many of the family as chose to come on board. The Laird himself, his beautiful daughter, and her admirer, obeyed the summons: they dined with us, and then we proceeded to the celebrated fall of Fyers.

I had seen this wonder before, but never to such advantage. Strangers generally come from the high road, and look down upon it; but the true sublime and beautiful is to be attained by going from the lake by Fyer's House, as we did, to look up to it. We landed at the river's mouth, and had to walk up near a mile, through picturesque openings, in a grove of weeping birch, so fresh with the spray of the fall, that its odours exhale constantly. We arrived at one of the most singular and romantick scenes the imagination can conceive. At the foot of the rock over which the river falls is a small circular bottom, in which rises, as it were, a little verdant hillock of a triangular form, which one might imagine an altar erected to the impetuous Naiad of this overwhelming stream; this rustick shrine, and the verdant sanctuary in which it stands, are adorned by the hand of nature with a rich profusion of beautiful flowers and luxuriant herbage. No wonder, overhung as it is with gloomy woods and abrupt precipices, no rude blast visits this sacred solitude;

while perpetual mists, from the cataract that thunders above it, keep it for ever fresh with dewy moisture ; and the " showery prism " bends its splendid arch continually over the humid flowers that adorn its entrance. Now do not think me romancing, and I shall account to you in some measure for the formation and fertility of this charming little *Delta*. Know then, that the nymph of the Fyres, abundantly clamorous in summer, becomes in winter a most tremendous fury, sweeping every thing before her with inconceivable violence. The little eminence which rises so oddly in " nature's softest freshest lap," was most probably at first a portion of rock forced down by the violence of the wintry torrent, and as the river covers this spot in floods, successive winters might bring down rich soil, which, arrested by the fragment above said, in process of time formed the altar I speak of. Along with this rich sediment left by the subsiding waters, are conveyed the seeds and roots of plants from all the varieties of soil which the torrent has ravaged : hence " flowers of all hues, and without thorn the rose ;" at least I could expect flowers worthy of Paradise in this luxuriant recess. While you stand in this enchanted vale, there is nothing but verdure, music, and tranquillity around you ; but if you look to either side, abrupt rocks and unsupported trees growing from their clefts, threaten to overwhelm you. Looking back, you see the river foaming through a narrow opening, and thundering and

raging over broken crags almost above your head; looking downwards, you see the same river, after having been collected in a deep basin at your feet, rolling rapidly over steep rocks, like steps of stairs, till at last it winds quietly through the sweet peaceful scene at Fyers House, and loses itself in Loch Ness. Now to what purpose have I taken up my own time and yours with this tedious description, which after all, gives you no just idea of the place ?

When we returned on board, our spirits, being by this time exhausted with walking and wonder, and talking and thunder, and so forth, began to flag. One lady, always delicate and nervous, was seized with a fit, a hysterical one, that frightened us all. I cut her laces, suppressed her struggles, and supported her in my arms during the paroxysm, which lasted near two hours. What you must allow to be very generous in the company, not one of them seemed to envy my place, or made the smallest effort to supplant me in it. We drank tea most sociably, however; landed our Glenmoriston friends, and tried to proceed homeward, but adverse fate had determined we should sup there too, and so arrested us with a dead calm four miles from home. Now midnight approached, and with it gloomy discontent and drowsy insipidity. Our chief took a fit of the fidgets, and begun to cry Poh, Poh ; his lady took a fit of yawning ; his little grandson took a fit of crying, which made his daughter take a fit of an-

ger; the Doctor took a fit of snoring; even the good natured Admiral took a fit of fretting, because the sailors had taken a fit of drinking. All of a sudden the Miss C.'s took a fit of singing, to the great annoyance of the unharmonious group; when I went to the deck, fell into a fit of meditation, and began to say, "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank." Indeed nothing could be more inspiring; now silvery calmness slumbered on the deep, the moonbeams quivered on the surface of the water, and shed a mild radiance on the trees; the sky was unclouded, and the sound of the distant waterfall alone disturbed the universal stillness. But the general ill humour disturbed my rising rapture, for it was now two o'clock, and nobody cared for poetry or moonlight but myself. Well, we saw the wind would not rise, and so we put out the boat, some growling, others vapid, and the rest half asleep. The gentlemen, however, rowed us home, and left the galley to the drunken sailors. You may judge how gaily we arrived.

I fancy Solomon had just returned from a long party of pleasure on the sea of Tiberias, where one of his Mistresses had the hystericks, when he drew the pensive conclusion, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Adieu!

LETTER XXX.

TO MISS EWING.

Fort Augustus, June 10, 1774.

MY DEAR BELL,

I WILL make no excuses for having your two entertaining letters so long unanswered ; but rather shew my gratitude, by giving you, as well as I can, some account of my late excursion, which has helped a little to divert the chagrin I felt at my ever dear Miss Ourry's departure. But I must thank you for your sincere sympathy with a grief, that to many would appear romantick or exaggerated, or might at best be considered as the result of a retired life, little acquaintance with the world, and the necessity which a weak mind feels of having some thing, or some body, to lean upon. She made my sorrow more excusable by seeming to feel, nay, really feeling, as much herself. Mine might be accounted childish, because I was, as you well know, womanly in appearance, while a mere child in years and judgment. But this was by no means the case with her. Had you but known her, you would be convinced that it is not merely the pleasure of agreeable society that I mourn over ; but that her mind was firm, rational, and enlightened, and her friendship a real benefit as well as honour to me. I know I tire you, but you must have patience, for you will

hear a great deal more on this subject, if you indulge me in saying, as usual, what is nearest my heart, and uppermost in my fancy.

This is the best place in the world for cultivating friendship ; and therefore, in spite of all the privations to which it condemns me, I will love it ; because there is little to scatter the recollection of the days I wish to live over again, or to divert me from self-culture, the only object that now remains to me. Do you remember my mentioning an agreeable neighbour in one of my former letters, who lives a mile off, in a situation equally singular and beautiful ? I mean Miss Christina Macpherson. She is an acquisition in her way, sensible and sincere, though uncultivated. She possesses a fund of genuine humour : and I believe has a regard for me. With this agreeable companion I went down to Inverness in May, making a very pleasant and picturesque voyage down our fine lake in the galley.

I got your kind letter just as I was coming away, but delayed answering it till I could tell you something of my travels. We meant to stay but a few days ; but, betwixt kindness and contrary winds, were detained three weeks. Your extreme delicacy with regard to your Dunbar jaunt might be an example to me ; but I resolve to do good for evil, and carry you north, though you would not give me an ideal jaunt to the south. Come with me then to the capital of the Highlands. The town is most agreeably situated at

the very threshold of this rugged territory ; the mountains of which rise with abrupt grandeur to bound the prospect on one hand, the plain being of four or five miles extent, while a large bay of the sea limits it on the other. From the odd looking hill of Tommin-a-heurich, which rises in the middle of this plain, the fertile shires of Ross and Murray indulge the eye with a boundless view of gentlemen's seats, seated generally under the shelter of eminences, and surrounded with wood plantations, (for the gentry here are great improvers,) whence we overlook extensive fertile plains, and

“ Softly swelling hills,
“ On which the power of cultivation lies,
“ And joys to see the wonders of his hand.”

Yet, over and above the partiality which we are apt to contract for our place of abode, we found a sameness in that extent of lowland that did not compensate for the variety afforded by our wild hills and winding glens. Besides, its north-east situation exposes it to such chilling blasts, as made us reflect with pleasure on the shelter we receive from our mountains ; which are like some lofty and revolting characters, who appear stern and awful to strangers, but are all warmth and kindness to their own family. Yet I should like none of these climates, where

“ Winter lingering chills the lap of May,”
if I could help myself.

But to return to the said capital. It is some-

how a cheerful looking place, because the people look cheerful ; yet not flourishing, though no situation can be better adapted for the purposes of commerce. It has, however, a genteel society ; and one meets with many well-bred, agreeable people. They have assemblies every fortnight, gayer than your Glasgow ones ; which may be accounted for by their being attended by the neighbouring gentry, who are numerous and polite. These gentry too have many of them been abroad, in the army or otherwise, and thus add liberal notions and polished manners to the acute and sprightly genius of the country. Their great distance from the capital often makes their provincial town the scene of their winter amusements. Nothing took my fancy so much there as the ladies. They are really, in general, showy, handsome women, excellent dancers, and have the best complexions I ever saw. Indeed you can scarce meet a young lady who does not remind you of the beauties in old romances. They have a great deal of flaxen hair, a skin transparently fair, and cheeks like the opening rose. Yet their features are seldom regular or delicate, and their beauty is of that kind which vanishes with the bloom of youth. Their persons are large, and they are fat as heart could wish ; yet on the whole, they look cheerful and innocent. They certainly speak better English than most Scots do, but with a sharp imperative tone. They are very frank, and full of professions of kindness. But I

tease you with what perhaps loses all interest in my dull description. We had our share of adventures in coming home, some of them abundantly ludicrous ; but the minutiae would be more tiresome than Clarissa's, without being compensated by the same interest and fancy. We moralized, and wandered by ourselves in a most beautiful wood for two or three days, lodging at night in a great old chateau, where the servants were ordered to give us all we wanted. All this while we waited for a fair wind ; we had no book or work. Christina sung like a syren to me, and I caught young wild ducks, which she tried to tame, while I gathered wild flowers. We began at last to suffer

“ The pains and penalties of idleness.”

I held out better than she, having more rural taste, and taking more interest in trifles. We came up at last, by moonlight, in a boat. In the morning we landed at the sweetest place imaginable, the Laird of Glenmoriston's* seat ; which delighted me so much with quietness and wildness, and romantick environs, and hospitable easy people, and beautiful children, that I would describe it to you if I thought Inverness were not more than enough at once. I should need to

.....

* Grant, of Glenmoriston ; a family respectable for its antiquity, and estimable for genuine worth and simple manners ; in whose hospitable mansion the spirit of true Highland cordiality loved to linger, surrounded by its attendant graces—ease, courtesy, and cheerfulness.

have the Princess Schehersade's talents, before I could give you half our adventures. They ended, however, in the laird and lady kindly coming up with us, and spending a most agreeable day at my father's. I have only time to tell you, that I have heard four times from Miss Ourry, that I thought many times of you every day in the wood, and that I am proud of being two letters in your debt.

I am most affectionately yours, &c..

LETTER XXXI

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, March 15, 1777.

MY DEAR BELL,

THE last hasty lines you had from me were so rapidly scrawled, that you would hardly make out the little meaning they contained. The sage bearer was on the fidget at my elbow the whole time I was writing it. I have been a good deal indisposed, great part of the winter, with colds, and your old enemy the tooth-ach. Now that I am better, I have a double enjoyment of every thing. You, who have the bustle of a crowded town, and a succession of amusements, to steal away the long dark evenings, must need wonder how we manage to get quit of them. Exiles as we are from the gay and fashionable

walks of life, we fall upon wonderful contrivances to soften the rigour of the season, and

“Twine a garland round dark winter’s brow.”

You can form no idea of our multiplied resources, unless you were to pass a month among us. Reading, walking, and all speculative and solitary amusements, you well know, can be enjoyed here as well as in town. But you have no notion how townified folks are, in all these little garrisons; and how these small circles, which necessity has driven together, ape the manners of the great world that they have reluctantly left behind. We too have our visits, our scandal, brought from thirty miles distant; our tittle-tattle, our jealousies, our audible whispers, and secrets that every body knows. When any one marries within the county-bounds, we all sit in judgment, and are sure to find some fault with either patty, as if it were our own concern; and when any one dies within twenty miles, we are all very busy in sounding their praises, and contrive to rake a great many virtues from among their ashes, for which we never gave them credit till they were out of the reach of our envy. Then when Mrs. N.* or Madame le Commandant, receives any new article of dress, we all fly to admire it, and then hurry away to wash gauses, or in some other
.....

* Mrs. Newmarch, daughter of Governor Trapaud, married to Captain Newmarch of the 7th, afterwards Major of that regiment. She was a pattern of conjugal affection, and domestick virtue.

imperfect manner to contrive a humble imitation of it. Not to dwell on each minute particular, believe that our handful of antiquated beaux and rusticated belles just do every thing in the country that yours do in town, only with more languor and ill humour. People habituated to that manner of life, carry its follies and impertinences into the very bosom of tranquillity. When they walk, 'tis on the hard gravel road, to get an appetite ; when they read, 'tis some periodical matter, to dose away time till the stated card-party begins. These people always give me pain. They appear like fish out of water, gasping and struggling in a strange element. It provokes me, in a place where nature seems to reign paramount, enthroned in the centre of her sublimest retreat, and surrounded by her genuine children, to see these insipid aliens insult her with their ennui. I mean no reflection on a town life, but merely to observe, that people, who have no resources within themselves, and aspire at no improvements, can hide their defects best in a crowd. I have been talking all the while of we and us, without telling you whom I meant to comprehend under these terms. We have, besides the old immovable set, an Officer of Invalids, and his wife and daughter from Edinburgh, who are ever pining for want of company they could ill afford to keep, and publick places, which it would ruin them to frequent. They strive much to exalt our idea of their former consequence, by regretting that there

are no noblemen's seats at a visiting distance, and that tumblers and rope-dancers never come this way. Then we have a pair who are a great acquisition ; Captain Donaldson, of the 42d, an excellent officer and accomplished gentleman, who is also beloved for his worth and good-nature. He is married to a daughter of Colonel Gordon Graham, of the same regiment, who, till now, lived always in a gay circle of the first company, but is wonderfully domesticated, and appears to be a good wife and tender mother. - - - - -

- - - - - So, among all this groupe of originals, Mr. G.'s satirical wit, and D.'s dry humour, find abundant food. - - - - - Alas ! these Americans, ungrateful favourites of Heaven, not satisfied with throwing away the happiness they possessed supereminently, what publick disturbance and private misery have they occasioned to others ! And how do the remotest corners of this extensive empire vibrate with the shock of their calamities !—My cordial love to our H.

LETTER XXXII.

TO MISS EWING.

Perth, May 6, 1777.

MY dear soul, I would give any thing you knew the family in which I now am.* Your

* The family of the Rev. Mr. Black, one of the ministers of Perth.

mind is fitted to taste the pleasure which angels may share with us ; that of seeing a happy family living in love and harmony, and enjoying the heartfelt consciousness of living in the faith, and imitation of our blessed Redeemer, with all the hope and comfort such a life inspires. Such is the excellent person whose tender care I now experience ; and such are the children of her heart and of her prayers ; the heirs of her humble piety and meek benevolence. Her eldest daughter* is certainly one of the worthiest of human beings ; and the ease and good breeding of the whole family would soon convince one that it requires neither constraint nor austerity to live *among religious folk*. How glad I am to have found out these *less than kin, and more than kind*, for they don't exactly know our connexion, and have the more merit in their attention. I can taste no pleasure without trying to share it with you. O, my true friend ! how eagerly do my hopes fly forward to the time when we shall once more share every hope and wish together ! Yet should this be denied, I would fain look forward with trembling hope to our re-union in that state, which excludes cares and wishes, yet excludes not——But I will avoid presumption, which must result from endeavouring to mingle, too fondly, the affections of this mortal state with our dim discovered views of the world unseen.—Did I tell

.....

* Miss Bridget Black, afterwards Mrs. Bonner.

you of an excursion to Scoon, which we made in company with a large party of the beau monde of Perth? I think I caught cold while contemplating the forsaken mansions of departed greatness. Yet I do not repent going; I love originals dearly, and antiquities *vastly*: I was pleased too with a monument of conjugal affection in the chapel belonging to the palace. Lord Stormont, it seems, was first married to a foreign lady, who had the strongest desire to accompany him to Scotland; but, dying abroad in the prime of life, she earnestly requested that her heart might be brought here, and deposited in his family burial place, that it might repose near to the object of her former attachment. It is deposited in a white marble urn, with a Latin inscription, expressive of her virtues and her lord's affection. I was pleased to think how good that heart must have been which could retain such warmth, amidst the frozen formalities and frivolous dissipation of a court.

LETTER XXXIII.

TO MISS EWING.

Blair in Athol, Tuesday Morn, May, 1777.

MY DEAREST BELL EWING,

HAVING written to Jenny this morning about my setting out, I must refer you to that letter for the motives of my journey. I found an honest man, whom I knew very well, from our place, driving an empty carriage north. My Robin is driver in ordinary to the Fort, and as wise and careful as a patriarch. I have passed a most agreeable day of solitary enjoyment. I travelled in silent state, without meeting a creature to interrupt my musings. I did not even read, but amused myself with my knitting, in up-hill roads. I did not speak a sentence till I had some necessary communing with my landladies, except getting the history of the famous battle, as I came through the pass of Killicranky. My Robin was very intelligent and distinct about the antiquities of the road. The singular beauty of the morning when I set out, and the satisfaction of getting my mind free from many doubts and fears that had hung upon me, with the hourly change of charming scenes, raised my late dejected spirits to a sweet serenity. I looked forward with pleasure towards home, the dear centre of all social and rational happiness. The beloved friends I had left behind rose in my mind, not with the pensive

parting look they usually wear to my imagination, but all cheerful and benignant; warm with the hopes of that re-union in which I have placed so much of my earthly happiness; the day arose with increased beauty, the scenery was enchanting, and all nature smiled around me. My mind had overwrought itself before, and was now settled into a calm, and overflowed with pleasing reflections; gratitude to my friends, and gratitude *for* such friends, inspiring a sublimer aspiration towards the great original source of pure affections and intellectual joys.

I shall not go into a minute description of places you have heard so much of, but content myself with saying, that this day's ride afforded more noble and pleasing objects than ever I met with in the same space of time; for you must remember that I came southward through Breadalbane; so all this is quite new to me. The rich and variegated country you pass through on leaving Perth, forms a fine contrast with that gloomy barrenness, and those frowning heights, that mark the entrance to the Highlands, far more savage than the interior, where the green wooded vales, which open towards Dunkeld, relieve the eye, and the ear is soothed with the deep distant sound of streams, that "wander not unseen," through these dark retreats. Dunkeld has a singular air of romantick grandeur,* derived from its wild sit-

* The Cathedral of Dunkeld, though ruinous, is still a fine object: the Chancel and Choir remain, and still are used as a place of worship.

uation, the remains of antiquity round it, and the soothing gloom of its fine woods, which abound in weeping birch, drooping its pensile branches, and sighing to every wind. These are contrasted by large solemn firs, that stand unmoved, in sullen dignity, amidst the fury of contending elements. You will think me very fanciful, investing plants with sentiment, but you may trust me when I assure you, I don't borrow from Harvey. The reverence I have for his character and intentions has made me often try to like his flowery style, but I never could succeed. I hope your efforts too, like mine, being, I am sure, equally sincere, may prove more successful. From Dunkeld you enter a wild, but not dreary country, in which the sun, looking upon Foscally "with farewell sweet," called my attention to "vales more soft than Arcady of old." The sweet winding stream of Argentine brought poor Struan to my recollection, with all his wanderings and hidings. If he were not such a sot, I should not think his life at all so unhappy as other people do. Poets have skill to complain, and, no doubt, feel acutely. But if their own imprudence, and the cruelty of the world, did not drive them into corners sometimes, they would neither muse nor warble, nor taste the sweets of nature, so peculiarly their own. And, in the bustle of the world, they would run all the risks other people do, without the common defences of caution and suspicion. Now this furnishes an excellent apology to

the rich and powerful, for permitting the ingenious and highly-gifted children of nature to languish in obscurity; and accounts for their letting them starve in corners, while they themselves choose their associates among those whom delicacy and sensibility shrink from; the dull, the callous, and the servile. I am growing ill-natured, and should have been better employed in telling you what a fine twilight scene this other princely seat of the Athol family forms, at this moment, opposite my window——

“ But now the fairy vallies fade,
 “ Dun night has veil’d the solemn view;
 “ Yet once again, dear parted *maid*,
 “ Meek Nature’s child, again adieu!”

LETTER XXXIV.

TO MISS EWING.

Fort Augustus, July 26, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

GOVERNOR Campbell’s * family left this place on Monday, and we are all very melancholy; for we never shall see the worthy old veteran more. He has a complication of disorders,

* Governor Campbell, of Fort George, who represented the family of Barcaldine: he died at Bath soon after his visit to Fort Augustus.

one alone of which would be enough to make life miserable. It must be so, and the world could not go on otherwise. Yet one, unused to such scenes, cannot avoid surprise to see how those we love best can divert themselves, and be very merry, while we are in agony. I suppose I was more affected than other people, merely because the scene is new to me. My poetical correspondence, after which you inquire so kindly, has been some time in a declining state, and is dying, if not already dead. It did not begin with me, and I think it will end with me. I wish I had kept copies for your amusement; but I have not, as yet, set so much value on any thing of my own writing, as to preserve a duplicate. This indifference is not affected. I do not give myself airs of despising poetry; on the contrary, I not only love but revere the Muse, as believing her the Priestess of virtue. Her sacred and boundless influence over the heart and the imagination, may, properly used, produce the happiest and noblest effects. Witty and profligate poets have, no doubt, perverted their talents to the worst purposes. But this only affects their contemporaries, for I do not believe they are ever read by the next generation. In the publick opinion they rot and corrupt with their writers. Who cares now for the wits of Charles the Second's day?—or who would wade through their dunghills? But truth and nature are for ever new and delightful. In all the vicissitudes of time they hallow and pre-

serve the very language in which they are written. Whoever is capable of being delighted by poetry, sees nature and virtue in fairer lights and brighter colours than others. But that reverence for the Muse, which arises from a conviction of her divine origin and boundless influence, makes me touch the lyre with a trembling hand. Indeed in my own case, as well as others, I feel a dread and remorse, as if writing without genius were something akin to prophesying without inspiration. But in this playful way of writing, merely for each other's amusement, which one may call rhyming conversation, I feel less reluctance, because I know it is to die in the little circle where it was born. Adieu, my dear friend; send me fire-side intelligence, my chief delight.

LETTER XXXV.

TO MISS EWING.

Fort Augustus, August 10, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WOULD willingly convey a share of all my pleasures to you. But then I fear you will have a bad bargain, by taking my pains into the account. Now I have a knack of adding other people's to my own stock, which will give you very little profit of the transmission (may I call

it) of my few wild, simple pleasures. You inquire of Mrs. C.* But for the small-pox, she would have been very handsome, on a large scale. As it is, she is very comely, and possesses uncommon powers of pleasing. There is a masculine strength and dignity visible both in her figure and understanding. But she mingles such perfect ease, pliant attention, and constant good humour with her dignity, that you respect her without being overawed. Her language is pure and elegant, and gives the idea of a woman of fashion, without the modish phraseology. Then you can easily discern that though she lives in the world, and knows it, she thinks her own thoughts, and expresses them in her own words. - - -

“The world is frantick—fly the race profane!”

How often does this quotation occur to me, when I see the struggles of vanity and avarice, and mark the end! Yet will these votaries of the world go on crying, “We are the people, and wisdom shall die with us;”—and they look upon us that love peace, and would eschew it, as poor visionary recluses, without any desirable object of pursuit. I could find in my heart to give them back their pity with interest, and daily relish more your happy project, of being doubly blest in our single blessedness, in that same air-built cottage behind the hill. If we are as happy in it as we

* Mrs. Campbell, sister to Sir John Sinclair, of Ulbster, married to the Governor of Fort George, and mother to the Countess of Caithness. She died many years since.

were last winter, we may think our lot enviable. Indeed the incursions of the husband and bairns, which Jenny resolves to have, will now and then disturb our tranquillity ; but when they are gone, we shall put on our spectacles, and contemplate our lap-dog and parrot with new delight. Talk of social ties and endearments, I am sure I get enough, and too much of them, without being bound in ties never to be broken. I wish I could make you sensible how close the ties of neighbourly kindness necessarily draw, in these little places. Every one that is sorry solicits your sympathy, and every one that is sick claims your attendance, if it is supposed you have any kindness to spare. Their distrusts and quarrels with each other make every one fly to me with complaints against each other. This new-married lady at C. too has taken a most inconvenient fancy to me ; and, like all other indulged invalids, cannot bear to have any of her fancies crossed : and so violent is her kindness while it lasts, that, betwixt her, and one drooping soul or other, Mary Gwynn not the least nor last, my very spirit is worn down with attending sick folks. Miss M'Culloch's sister bears heavier on my mind than any one of them. She is left by herself, her father and mother being gone to some medical wells, where, I fear, the good primitive man will die. I never passed such a confused summer ; and my poor Christina Macpherson, that used to cheer my soul "with songs divine to hear," must

be away too ; and poor Pastor Fido.* The sweet evenings, and bright silent noons, that we three were wont to spend in tracing up Tarfe, and wandering and lounging by turns on *Drimen Duie*, with our whimsical broken starts of conversation, as detached from the rest of the world, and as unlike it as the kids that played over our heads, rise to my memory like the musick of other times. I would not grudge the absence of this nymph and swain, if they were as happy where they are ; but I am sure they are not. When shall I again dwindle into my dear insignificance ?——A thousand things used to charm me when my mind was vacant and easy, which I cannot relish now that these restless beings have disturbed me, by making me the depository of their self-created troubles. This it is to live so plaguy near people, and meet with them continually ; though neither estimable nor amiable, they get hold enough of one's affections to make one uneasy. Factions in miniature are like a swarm of moschettoes ; they can't kill you, but they tease you incessantly, buz about your ears, and hinder your sleep. I wish I could communicate to them some of our "rapture for the Muse," to cure them of slander and captiousness. When I am czarina of some new discovered region, one of my first edicts shall be, that every one of my subjects, who is incapable of

* Pastor Fido — a *nom de Guerre*, given to the companion of our walks ; he was afterwards Minister of Laggan ; and was then just gone to settle there.

being amused in a rational and elegant manner, shall work hard from morning to night. And in this regulation I will consult the happiness of my said subjects,

“ Nor let their everlasting yawn express

“ The pains and penalties of idleness.”

I have now in my eye a person of plain common sense, and much humanity, who, without a grain of literature, a scruple of taste, or an atom of fancy, contrives to be as busy as a bee, and as cheerful as a lark. The whole year round she rises early, regulates her family, and then sits down to work and to sing. When her own work is done, she works for her poor neighbours ; does not care a straw whether she is praised or they are thankful, but goes on with the pure motive of doing good ; without any gratification in view, but the mere joy of seeing the poor children look well in their new clothes. Thus she goes on. Never inquires what others are doing, unless she can help them ; and never goes out of her usual routine, unless there is something unusually good to be done. And all this costs her no effort :

“ Her duties walk their constant round,

“ Nor make a pause, nor find a void.”

“ If I was not Alexander, I would be Diogenes,” said the hero of Macedon. If I were not “ a muse-rid mope,” I would be this serenely happy being, saith your friend. You see what rural pleasures I am like to enjoy. Will. Houston, sitting behind the counter between his day-book and his bible,

tastes the sweets of summer more than I do.—
 “ Daughter of winding Clutha ! walk forth in the
 light of thy beauty, among the waving willows of
 Duchnafall. There let the breeze sigh among
 thy heaving locks, while thy white hand, thrown
 over thy trembling harp, awakes the memory of
 joys that are past. Then, in the bright stillness
 of noon, while the hunter pants wearied in the
 shade, and no sound is heard along the desert
 heath ; let thy sister, who mourns solitary in a
 distant land, visit the musings of thy secret soul !”
 Think of me, who have not, since I came home,
 walked beyond the garrison or village, except in-
 deed to Culachy,* and that was always in *quick*
time. I have not once seen my Penseroso Grot,
 nor been in Thicket Island. My rural enjoyments
 are confined to a twilight or moonlight walk un-
 der our own trees ; and there, indeed, I resume
 my wonted pleasure of contemplating the calm
 bosom of my own lake, the purest of mirrors, ex-
 hibiting a prospect awfully solemn and wildly
 magnificent ; while the mountain tops seem sleep-
 ing on its surface.

“ In truth, I am a strange, and wayward wight,

“ Fond of each dreadful, and each gentle scene.”

In this favourite scene of my meditations, many a
 glowing and pensive sigh is devoted to you.
 There, with other associates of my early days,

.....
 * Culachy—the place of residence of Christina Mac-
 pherson ; a beautiful farm, romantically situated at the
 opening of Glen-tarfe, about a mile from Fort Augustus.

your image comes full upon me, and I indulge in reveries that end in pain. Farewell, friend of my solitude !

LETTER XXXVI.

TO MISS EWING.

Fort Augustus, Sept. 21, 1778.

MY DEAR SOUL !

I HAVE been very agreeably engrossed for some days past. You know how closely Mrs. Sprot and I drew to each other, from similarity of taste and sentiments. She has corresponded with me since she came to Urquhart, and twice attempted to come up, but was somehow hindered. —A week ago I was confounded at receiving a letter from the *wee* advocate : Jenny will tell you who that is. I demurred upon the occasion, with modest hesitation, and opened it with consternation, and no little trepidation, which caused a small palpitation ; for I dreaded a declaration, too bold to be made by any in the nation, to merit that needs no more elevation, in a maid whose bright graces illumine her dark station. But I found my mistake on more near observation ; so, being ashamed of my supposed penetration, I saved my vanity by an evasion ; and imputed his silence to deep veneration, which often accompa-

nies great admiration. Were I not afraid of the imputation of pedantick affectation, I could make this clear by a learned quotation from M. T. Cicero's fortieth oration ; therefore, upon due deliberation, being moved by your vexation, beyond any other consideration, I must resume the thread of my narration for your further edification, and my thorough vindication, which concerns you as much as any relation ; for scandal, you know, spreads like an inundation, and even your prudence and my moderation cannot always silence a false imputation, which would at least raise our indignation, though we bear greater evils with calm resignation. So be sure to exert yourself for my justification whenever you hear me blamed in mixed conversation ; mention my virtues with great exaggeration, and my faults, if I have them, with some extenuation ; for even vices admit of some palliation, except when they rise, by a fatal gradation, to a climax beyond all alleviation. A friend should never attempt aggravation ; for though we live among a perverse generation, each of us may keep peace in our own habitation, and, by lying in bed, to escape observation, become worthy patterns for general imitation, and not sleep in the face of a whole congregation, which would afford Andrew great delectation. So I conclude, in hopes of your full approbation, for I am sure you must be tired of so many long words in rotation, as you always delight in concise abbreviation, as much as I do in fluent and diffuse nar-

ration, &c.—Well, but this letter from our *wee* friend meant nothing but to recommend to our attention the two brothers Sprot; one, my acquaintance through his mate, who, by his worth and engaging manners, can always recommend himself; the other, a bachelor brother of his, who is newly come home from India, not at all like his brother, but I believe a good kind of man. The brothers and the lady came purposely to spend a few days with us. We enjoyed each other exceedingly, and should have done so much more, had not other company interrupted us. Mrs. Sprot improved upon me greatly; like Swift's Stella, she has lived in a circle of men and books, and has acquired certain peculiarities, from so doing; yet she has a great fund of good humour, and has a spirited ease in her manner that is very pleasing. She possesses genuine sentiment, and great sincerity; has a warm heart, and an excellent taste, which appears in her dress, furniture, books, &c. but more especially in her friends,—I was going to add, in her husband, but she, more properly, was his taste. I forbear to tell you how modest and amiable he is. I content myself with observing, that I never saw a husband whose behaviour to a wife pleased me so well. They would have induced me to go with them to Fort George, where I had promised to go on a visit to Mrs. Campbell,* but I could not, being the week of our sacrament, which shortened their visit.

.....
 * The wife of the then Governor of Fort George.

* * * * *

Sept. 21st is come, and I have not gone to Stratherick, having been agreeably prevented by a visit from a cousin ; not P. but a married cousin, a great favourite. He will stay some days, which I rejoice at : I dearly love my relations when they are tolerable, and would fain blind myself when they are not. I have got much information from him with regard to our mutual friend, who continues to roll a stone up a hill with the usual success. He, indeed, seems born to a froward fate, if indeed it is not rather his folly than his fate. His late adventures are as singular as himself ; but I will not swell this overgrown epistle with them. You ask if ever he and Pastor Fido met ? He was a month here at the very time P. F. was in the gloomy humour I told you of ; and their behaviour to each other was so haughtily cold on one side, so saucy and biting on the other ! One never unbent from his haughty reserve, so far as to cast a glance at any of the kindred, only, on going away, he would look back to see if I were alive after all this ; the other spared no reflections, and would barely allow him the advantage of a tolerable exterior ; and was out of patience when I assured him P. F. wanted neither good sense nor good nature, though he did not think proper to spoil them with daily wear. At that time P. F. would think it beneath his dignity to rail at any one, but shew his displeasure by a disdainful silence, when the object of it happens

to be the subject of conversation. I rejoice sincerely to hear of our dear Harriet's speedy recovery. The world cannot have too many like her, if her children resemble her. I am truly sorry that your friend has thrown herself away on such a trifle. She always encouraged a train of coxcombs; I never saw a person of so much sense so little jealous of her dignity. Adieu, dear friend!

You in my thoughts, I repeat the five first verses of the twentieth Psalm, which you pointed out to me when I came away—

“O'er all my soul your sacred influence breathes,

“Inflames imagination, raises thought,

“Infuses every tenderness,” &c. &c.

LETTER XXXVII.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, October 3, 1778.

I HAVE now to thank you for two of your kind letters since you returned from the Fairley; but, before I advert to their contents, will carry on my narrative as usual. The day I sent you my last, I received one from Inverness, with an account of poor Mr. Mac C.'s death, which is a loss to society in general; but to this place, as well as to his own family, irreparable.

R

He was a man of primitive simplicity of manners, and undeviating rectitude of principle ; and discharged the duties of his useful though humble station with peculiar diligence and fidelity, and was indeed the principal bulwark of religion in this place since poor P. F. left us ; for our present pastor does not reside. Well, but I was desired to communicate to the poor girls the loss they had sustained. I can give you no idea of the terror I felt at being forced to perform this task. Yet the scene was even beyond what I had feared. The widow was at the wells where he died ; so the poor souls were in a house by themselves, in a lonely place, half a mile from the village, where scarce one of our circle had the humanity to go near them. Our family, and that at Culachy, were indeed the only exceptions. The pretty gentle creatures have so much sensibility, (how that poor word is hackneyed !) “ that they really cannot bear such scenes of distress ; ’tis too much for their feelings, sinks their spirits,” &c. So they prudently avoid every thing that can awake in their hearts those emotions which certainly result from salutary impressions, and produce the best moral effect. The divine pattern of every excellence, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, set no such example.

“ O for the sympathetick glow,

“ Which forc’d the holy tear to flow,

“ When, weeping over friendship’s grave ;

“ Ev’n he forgot his pow’r to save ! ”

My dear love, I beg you will join with me in despising this selfish sordid kind of sensibility, for I am just now particularly angry with it. Dear soul, your too recent experience will teach you to judge, though others cannot, of the anguish and despair that overwhelmed these poor orphans. Poor indeed ! for their whole dependence was their father's exertions. But they have a good and generous brother ; and, what is better still, they have their father's good works, his prayers, his example. They will not be left desolate. I never behaved worse ; I had, I thought, resolved, and fortified myself in the best way I could, but in vain. Indeed the scene was new to me. I never witnessed one of the kind ; and it was the worse that I liked the poor sufferers so well. I wrought myself up to a forced composure ; but when I told, as softly as I could, what every one else knew, the violence of their anguish was overpowering. I went up twice every day since to assist with their mourning, &c. but got so much cold at last, with walking in wet weather, that I have been feverish and confined since ; but I am beginning to mend. I will not plague you with a detail of petty grievances, but tell you, in general, that I have been teased and plagued beyond sufferance with people of a very different description. - - - - - To bear our share of the sorrows of our friends is a duty we are born to ; we are the better for it. But to be worn out with the follies and absurdities of those who

are incapable of friendship, is truly hard. Were I to wish myself any thing but what I am, it would be a hedge-hog. Happy brute! that can be all collected within itself, and there lie wrapped, indifferent and insensible to all that passes without. I have seen human hedge-hogs; but these I do not envy, for they never unroll themselves. Now the genuine hedge-hog only does it occasionally, when it runs the risk of being injured; and so would I. I suppose you have heard me speak of the brother of the new-married lady at Culachy,* who, at a very early age, and in the most honourable manner, has made a fortune in India. He is an uncommon, indeed I may say, an exalted character; one of those of whom Pope says,

“Great souls there are, who, touch’d with warmth divine,
“Give gold a price, and teach its beams to shine.”

I know you agree with me in taking a strong interest in valuable and singular characters, though not personally known to them. I shall give you a slight sketch of this estimable person’s history: He has just left us, and is to return, on his way from his native island, to visit his sister; and we are daily entertained with anecdotes of him. His history includes his character. In the first place, he was the son of a worthy clergyman of the Isles, distinguished for his learning and abilities, and

.....
* The person here mentioned is a well known and much esteemed character; who, after this period, succeeded to the interim Government of Bengal, on the return of Governor Hastings to England.

whose writings have thrown great light on the antiquities of his country.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Now this is as pretty as fiction, and as true as history. It is inconceivable what good these small pensions, so judiciously distributed, have produced. They have cheered dejection, enlivened hope, and supported industry. Here is a man that makes more than a dozen families happy, at less expense than half a contested election would occasion. These small sure streams of bounty, that never dry up, do people more good than a large sum, which would put it in their heads to be proud and idle, and sit down to hatch imaginary wants. Whenever a shower of gold falls upon me, I certainly will go and do likewise. His wealth, the reward of scientifick service, as one may call it, to a native prince, was not got in the common manner, and is just as uncommonly spent. Two hundred pounds, which he sent to be distributed among the poor of his father's parish, I had almost forgot to mention. Advert, that this is not done from the overflowing of an immense fortune ; he is not rich in the Eastern acceptation yet. But, as Burnet says of Tillotson,

“He is rich in good works.”

Excuse repetition and confusion. I tell you once more, the people hereabouts tease and harass me with their hollow friendship and undesired

confidence; civilities that demand a return, and would extort gratitude, where there is neither principle or steadiness; and to devote your time when you cannot give your esteem, and then to have the only estimable person in the whole groupe injured and neglected by the rest; to see that estimable person sinking under a secret load of heart-breaking sorrow, which I cannot alleviate, and must not seem to know: how vexatious! My dear creature, you know nothing of the strife of human passions. 'Tis here they rage and swell, and are seen in their full magnitude. Confined to a few objects, and within a narrow circle, their agitation is more violent, and their effects more visible. From the dreadful effervescence of idleness and malignity fermenting together, may all I love be preserved! The last is a most profound and mysterious period; but if I ever see that blessed sight, your face, I will give you a very full explanation of it, which will make you wonder at least, if not cross yourself. I turn to a more pleasing subject, the contents of your letters. I am glad you were so well entertained at the Fairley by my old acquaintance Clarissa, and your new acquaintance Mr. Monteith. I observe you frequently preferred the company of the former to the latter, and am pleased to find you so partial to my favourite heroine. Never, sure, were characters so well drawn, discriminated, and supported as those in "Clarissa." Her own in particular. Never was any thing so uniform-

ly consistent, so raised above common characters, and yet so judiciously kept within the bounds of nature and probability. I know very well there are those who, from a very indelicate species of delicacy, object to the conduct of the story in certain instances. Those who can, in the midst of such distress as hers, withdraw their minds from contemplating the trials of a suffering angel, to pollute their imaginations, are very unworthy indeed to be admitted into even the ideal presence of a Clarissa. I know not any criterion by which I should be readier to judge, and try, any one's character and taste, than by observing with what degree of interest and feeling they survey this correct drawing from nature. You can't think with what scorn I listen to little misses, and *very little* masters, who tell us in parrot phrase, "Nobody reads Clarissa now. People *now* think it languid and tedious." Just as if the effect of good sense, wit, humour, pathos, and, in short, pure christianity, could vary with the hour, like fleeting modes and manners. Ranting tragedies, written while rant was fashionable; or vile comedies, where wit and talents are lavished in painting manners which happily no longer exist—these, I say, may go out of fashion; but truth is immutable, and nature, if you will bear a quibble, has invariably the self-same variations. Who then would affect to despise a clue that leads through all intricacies to her inmost recesses, because the thread of which it is composed is

very fine, very long, and artfully twined of many filaments? The means are proportioned to the end. The story, no doubt, unfolds slowly; yet every sentence answers the great end of bringing the actors in the scene so immediately before your eyes, that you seem to have known and lived with them. The approach is long, but it is to a noble object, and the avenue is planted with such endless variety of flowers, both pleasing and useful, that you must be dull and incurious indeed, if you stop and linger by the way. I know nothing, out of the volume of inspiration, equal to the death-bed of Clarissa. I feel the effect always new; wrapped in the delusion of this overpowering fiction, I have dreamed, as the Patriarch did at Luz, that I saw angels ascending and descending. Generally in every story, real or fictitious, the interest ceases with the life of the hero or heroine. But, in this instance, we hover over the vault, and trace every circumstance relating to the departed saint, with fond veneration. Yet, after being so partial to our own sex, as to allow Clarissa to be a natural character, we may be so just to the other, as to suppose Lovelace carried almost beyond possibility. A man could not exist, who, to so fine an understanding, such courage, wit, generosity, and talents, could unite so much cunning and cruelty, folly and villany. Yet the author has so far preserved probability, as to make him act and speak as such a being would do, if any being could unite such contradictions.

Modern history indeed refutes my wise conclusions, by presenting us with an almost similar character, Lord Bolingbroke, whom Pope distinguishes by the epithet of all-accomplished St. John. He addressed his *Essay on Man* to him, and speaks of him on all occasions with the most enthusiastick admiration. Swift does almost the same; and Chesterfield, who only saw him in extreme old age, when he might be thought to have outlived his talents and his graces, was yet dazzled with his person and address, talks of him as the complete model of a finished fine gentleman, as to manners, conversation, and eloquence. Yet this man, after running into the most violent excesses in libertinism, and prostituting his fine talents to serve the meanest and most corrupt ends of a party, without reforming from his innate vices, had turned them into a more dangerous channel, by endeavouring to undermine those principles which the tenor of his life had disgraced. Yet he had, after all, the art to persuade even the virtuous Pope, and that all-observing cynick Swift, of his sincerity and rectitude; and this merely by the force of eloquence, shining parts, and a kind of constitutional something, that passed for generosity and good-nature. Thus, without a heart, without truth or morals, this man was enabled to captivate and do mischief, not only all his life, but even after death. The deistical writings he left behind were not the result of self-conviction, or a desire to convince others, but the mere van-

ity of exploring the trackless wastes of speculation, of overthrowing established opinions, and thus creating a region in which to rule. It was like Satan's expedition in search of some domain, where he might exercise power, and produce misery. I do not know what tempted me to wade so far out of my depth after Lord B., but you wish me to say all that comes in my head, and you must take the consequences. Farewell, affectionately!

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, November 14, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR letter from Stirling is not arrived. I have desired this bearer, who passes through that ancient city, to call for it, and send it by Edinburgh. 'Tis very childish to say that the perusal of your letters makes so much of my happiness; but in this deserted place there is so much mistrust, so much serious trifling, such a dearth of the language of truth, of nature, and the affections, that they are "the sunbeams" of my soul, and I count the intervals between them impatiently.

I must pique you into punctuality by telling you I have a more witty and eloquent correspond-

ent. Tho' I cherish your "retiring softness" with perverse preference ; I am tempted to transcribe some original poetry from her last letter, because 'tis the prettiest I have seen her write, and not because I am the subject. Read this "Address to Memory."

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Our *Drimen Duie* friend is still indisposed : what if he should walk off to the Elysian Fields without ceremonious leave taking ? I think it were as well to take the Female Quixote's way, and send him word that he may live if he pleases. If raillery could relieve anxiety, it were well ; and if diseases in real life would yield to the sympathy of friendship, it were also well. I keep my indignation at all the offenders here within very moderate bounds ; for I only preserve my serenity ; that is, when they would be jocose, and familiar, as formerly, I look grave, and pretend not to understand them. For Mrs. Newmarch's sake, I carry my righteous wrath no further. Why do you desire me to burn your letters, while you so religiously preserve mine ? You can have no motive for this, which I have not in a higher degree for keeping the pictures of your soul. I have cut all the leaves out of a great old goose of a book, and there I have placed those pretty pictures in regular succession ; with Miss Ourry's, and Mrs. Sprot's ; cousin Jean's letters, which I value much for the vein of original humour that

runs through them, are there too : so are some of Beattie's poems. You can't think how diligently I peruse this good book. Watts on the Passions is not dearer to you ; for, as warm as he is in your workbag, do you think your paper bag of epistles can ever lift its head in competition with my great book ? No ; it has too much respect for its betters, and has learnt from me the doctrine of gradations. To counteract the vile influence of the vile world, I am always sending you some true story of good deeds performed, or good souls acting or suffering, from my Alpine nook. (I don't mean the Fort.) Did you ever know so good a creature as Sandy the primitive ? See now, he insists on his mother and sisters coming to live with him, and means to support the whole family in ease and abundance. Is it not like Joseph sending for his brethren—and Joseph too was a factor. You may suppose the good blind Duke to be Pharoah, if you please ; and to complete the resemblance, the Highlanders are all herdsmen, and the vulgar in the Low Country hold them in abomination. It just now occurs to me, why, in a country so near as England, and even in one so assimilated as Ireland, Scotch manners are so little understood. They never write a page on these subjects without making some blunder, which to a Scotchman seems very ludicrous. This comes from confounding the peculiarities, dialect, &c. of the Highlanders with those of the Lowlanders, the two most dis-

similar classes of beings existing, in every one particular that marks distinction; the former indeed are a people never to be known unless you live among them, and learn their language. Smollet, in *Humphrey Clinker*, is the only writer that has given a genuine sketch of Scotch manners; and in what relates to the lower class of Highlanders, even he appears allowably ignorant, not knowing their language, and having left the country so young, that he was in a great measure a stranger to the Highlands, though born a borderer on it. The Highlanders are Celts (as Pinkerton in the bitterness of his soul calls them.) Now I and my ancestors are genuine Britons, who, retiring with surly independence before the red eye of the King of the world, and his imperial Eagles, made the strength of rocks ours, snuff'd like wild asses at the voice of the pursuer, and still retain "the garb of old Gaul, and the fire of old Rome." As for you good sober souls of Clydesdale, and all other Dales, sung by the pastoral Muse, your ancestors were good plain Saxons; who, begging to be excused from any particular intimacy with Danish ravens, and Norman leopards, and all foreign birds and beasts, came northward, to shelter under the Scottish fir, and wear for their badge the self-righted Scottish thistle. If proofs were wanting, Shakspeare supplies abundance. King John's cooks and footmen, it is evident, spoke much the same language with the cadies of Edinburgh; and any of us, who

have taste to relish Shakspeare, understand readily terms that have puzzled all his southern commentators. In short, you dwellers of the dales, in manners, cookery, &c. are just what the old English were in the days of the rival roses. I have been greatly amused at hearing an unfledged English Ensign pour contempt upon our good national barley broth, in almost the very terms used by the Constable of France in deriding the heroes of Agincourt :

“ Can sodden water,
“ A drench for sur-rein’d jades, their barley broth,
“ Decoct their cold blood to such valiant heat !”

Now pray do not forget to lodge this discussion and quotation in your paper-bag, where much digression and excursion already dwells. To return to Sandy the primitive, the deserving hero of my tale :—he will at length so colonize the banks of the unrivalled Lake, that the prophetick Valkyria may once more say,

“ Those whom late the desert’s beach
“ Pent within its bleak domain,
“ Soon their ample sway shall stretch
“ O’er the plenty of the plain.”

Adieu, and do not be angry at me for making you “ Look into the pit, whence thou wast digg’d ; into the hole of the rock, whence thou wast taken ;” though a more exalted origin is claimed by your high descended and high minded friend.

LETTER XXXIX.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, April 5, 1779.

THESE promises are very fine, and I suppose generally made on such occasions, but I have no wish for any such homage. I never desire or hope for more confidence, tenderness, or attention than you and I have shewn towards each other. Indeed I expect not even to taste the sweets of a more perfect union of minds. I am neither surprised or chagrined at what you tell me of people's notion, that my supposed attainments will disqualify me for ordinary duties, that is, for discharging them with diligence and propriety. I shall always think myself obliged to you for every information of this kind, without the least desire of knowing from whom it comes. It is very natural, and perfectly allowable, if one is charged with any matter of fact which one knows not to be true, that every means should be immediately used to disprove it. But, when we merely hear of these vague and general censures, which we constantly, and often justly, pass on each other, instead of a hot and hasty vindication, we should endeavour to profit by this indirect instruction, and remove the pretexts for blame. These good people only think of me what I have often thought of myself, that I am not well quali-

fied for the constant exertion, self-command, and caution requisite in a married life. There is no passion implanted in the mind but for some good purpose ; vanity for instance. Now I think there is nothing I should be so vain of as the conquest of my own habits, and other people's prejudices. To excel in a sphere that is thought beyond me, would be a proud boast indeed. Whatever one bends one's whole mind to, there is some chance of excelling in. But time must decide ; and, in the mean time, I must hope and endeavour. I may be rash or indolent, but, on the other hand, I am pretty easy, being sensible I am not so obstinate, opinionated, and self-loving, as pretenders to literature among our sex are generally said to be. I give you no directions. Suppose yourself a bride, and apply the money as far as it will go. As to what has been said of what I have written, I am far, far, from assuming the least merit upon it. But this I am very proud of, that, possessing from infancy that glow of imagination, and facility of expression, which the owners are so apt to mistake for genius, I have written so very little. That little too was thrown off in such a careless manner, as made it evident that I had not given much time or thought to it. In the mean time, I send two poetical pieces for your amusement, merely to have them out of the way of more serious concerns. One is from my fanciful correspondent that you wot of ; I think it her best ; perhaps I am the more partial to it,

knowing the subject to be real. I knew the young lady who is the theme of this tale of sorrow. She died last winter, in the twenty-third year of her age, a victim to the struggle betwixt duty and attachment in a delicate and well principled mind. Her conduct, though imprudent, was perfectly innocent. But she was every way delicate, her feelings nursed by indulgence, and all made of tenderness and musick. It is cruel to bring up any body so very helpless. I will tell you all about her in my next. The Ode to Hygeia was written by your friend, and intended for Mrs. Sprot, who has long been urging me for something of the kind.

How happy it is, since I am destined to forsake a place so dear to me, that the ties are loosened that held me to it :

“ The shades, the streams, the groves remain :

“ But friendship there I seek in vain.”

One by one, every body that I cared for dropped off, and I saw nothing around me but dreary vacuity. We shall see what kind of a world the odd beings, so peculiar in tastes and opinions, will create amid the central mountains. No people, however, have their happiness so much in their own power as we may have, if we were not so much in the region of tempests. We may, perhaps, be obliged to go to a cave, like Ajut and Aningait. With love to dear Jenny, believe me ever yours.

LETTER XL.

TO MISS EWING.

Fort Augustus, April 18, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHEN I finished my last, I meant to begin another directly, but was prevented by indisposition. I am now, thank God, much better. My grandmother's death, which happened in the beginning of last week, has occasioned my being in a perpetual hurry ever since, with mournings, &c. She has been thought dying for half a year past. The days of her pilgrimage were neither few nor evil (comparatively speaking;) she was above fourscore years upon earth, doing all the good that singular activity and benevolence, directed by very sound sense, could enable her to perform in her contracted sphere: and in consequence of this constant exertion, and the general good will it excited, she was always cheerful, and very resigned in affliction. She departed, full of hope and comfort, with a full confidence in the merits of her Divine Redeemer; and the looking back on a well spent life, supported her in the hour when all other dependence fails, in her eighty-first year. She retained a singular freshness of complexion, and evident remains of that beauty for which in her youth she had been distinguished. Few have met with severer trials than

this worthy person had to struggle with; the family from whence she sprung, and the principal ones with which she was connected, were unhappily involved in the fatal (error I must call it, for they, surely, acted on mistaken principle) well the error, the blunder, the mischance of 15 and 45; and her house was crowded with the orphan children of her sister and other relations. This tried her feelings, and wasted her little possessions severely; but still she was cheerful, and thought it all well bestowed. 'Tis astonishing what good a superior mind can do, in any situation of life, providing, (and be it always provided) that they walk straight on in the path of practicable duty, and do not "waste their strength," in the "strenuous idleness" of spinning systems, and dreaming dreams, and seeing visions of conferring great benefits, when they should, by vigorous exertion, (like those of my grandmother) enable themselves to pour forth a series of small, yet essential ones. Now, peace be with thy liberal spirit, my grandmother! and peaceably mayst thou rest with thy fathers in that green and sea surrounded isle, where, undisturbed by the sons of little men, or the spades of venal sextons, so many of thy race rest in social slumber. Oh, to be buried in one of those sanctified islands, where no little boys jump over grave stones, or no great ones trample over the hallow'd dead with callous indifference! 'Tis hard to leave this sacred asylum of the warrior and the hunter, over

which the æolian tones of airy harps sound to the passing blast, while the midnight rowers glide by in solemn silence ; but as we must stay in the great island of Magna Britannia a while longer, "and in this harsh world draw our breath in pain," we must refresh our spirits with the best things we meet in it. Now, as I am in the humour of telling stories, and take it for granted that you are in the humour of listening to them, and as female friendship that stands the test of time and his fellow traveller adversity, is one of the best things this untun'd sphere affords, I shall tell you something I have had often in my mind, and as often forgot to amuse you with. You must have heard of Mrs. Buchanan, and the poor contemptible, whom her friends persuaded her to marry, when she was a mere child incapable of choosing ; but perhaps you have not heard that this laird had before paid his addresses to her cousin, the beautiful and accomplished Miss Lucy C. of Glenure, who refused him in favour of a Mr. Cameron in this country, a man every way worthy of her. It was this disappointment which led the "Lowland laird" to seek an alliance with his present wife, with whom he lived but a few months, his outrageous follies and her inexperienced and rash attempts to restrain them, occasioning an irreconcilable difference. They separated, and "the laird," who was no niggard, allowed her such an annuity as would enable her to live genteelly any where. From her youth, and

natural love of society and the world, every one thought she would live in the capital; but this, and every scheme of what is called enjoying life, was prevented by her strong attachment to her cousin, Lucy C. above mentioned. Indeed, to use Shakspeare's words on a similar occasion,

“ Their loves

“ Were stronger than the natural bond of sisters ;”

which their former rivalship in Buchanan's affections had never diminished: and whenever Mrs. Buchanan got in some measure free from the matrimonial yoke, she went to live with her cousin. Mr. Cameron's abode, in a sequestered highland glen, much retired, and surrounded with a fast increasing family, and with the endless cares of a country life, could have few attractions for a very young lady, to whom all this was new and foreign. Yet actuated by the spirit of heroick friendship, she forsook the world, and secluded herself from what are usually looked on as the pleasures of it, on her cousin's account, whose tender gratitude you may imagine. In this singular and happy union, they lived above seven years. About the time I was in Glasgow with you, Mrs. C. died on the birth of her sixth child. Her cousin, tho' overwhelmed with sorrow at this melancholy event, did not seek for comfort by returning to the world, or to her other friends. She has taken the charge of her cousin's family, and is to her children the most anxious and tender of mothers; and to this painful duty she has devoted the best

years of her life, in this remote place, occupied by cares, that nothing less than necessity, or a mother's feelings could induce any one to undergo. I do not know whether you will view this in the same light, but I think it the most affecting and heroick instance of true friendship I have met with in real life. One can't help comparing it with the lively and impressive portrait Rousseau draws of Clara and Eloisa. I wonder if there is any such friendship among men. Their way of shewing friendship is to venture for each other those lives which they are so apt to squander in duels; but where was friendship, among them, ever so persevering, so graceful, and so tender? Much good may their stern virtues, and their publick virtues, and their shining virtues do them; while ours, that flourish in the shade, are their consolation, and the chief blessing of society after all. I am sure I neither envy their turbulent pleasures, or dear bought honours. But we must not speak treason of our protectors. Adieu, *Friend*. Can I call you any thing dearer or kinder?

LETTER XLI.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, July 13, 1779.

MY EVER DEAR NANCY,

YOU have indeed fully made up for your past seeming negligence, and, what I once

thought was impossible, you have really got beyond me in attention and kindness. Yet do not too soon overvalue yourself, and distrust me, on the strength of this great effort; I refer you to my past punctuality, and hope to convince you further by future steadiness. Without preamble or circumroundabout, I will satisfy the anxiety you express about the hints in my last. Know then, that I was at that time engaged in preparations for an event, (to me very important) which took place the following day. 'Tis very odd that our letters, containing intelligence so interesting, should thus have cross'd each other. I am no longer my own, and yet I will be always yours. I have not formed a connexion that will chill my affections, or contract my heart. I share all your sorrows as you recite them, and still am most uneasy at the effect which your too acute feelings must have on a constitution so delicate as yours. But you have a weighty duty yet demanding your attention. You will find comfort to yourself in administering it to your remaining parent. The sublime and solid consolations which true religion and right reason afford, are all your own; and, though well assured that there is indeed

“No pang like that of bosom torn

“From bosom, bleeding o'er the sacred dead,”

yet I trust those truths, which claimed so much of your attention in your gayest and most prosperous days, will support you in your heaviest hours. It remains now to tell to whom I have made the

greatest of all possible sacrifices. It is to a reverend acquaintance of yours, whose name you will find at the conclusion of this. The change so important to me happened in the end of May last. After staying near two months at the Fort, and wandering many hours every day through our old delightful haunts, to "talk the flowing heart," and compare past conjectures and meditations, we have at length taken up our residence in the Pastor's cottage, which is literally pastoral. Here we have since continued; not enjoying the ideal felicity of romances, but that rational and attainable degree of happiness which is derived from a sincere and tender mutual esteem, health, tranquillity, and a humble and grateful consciousness of being placed in a situation equally remote from the cares of poverty and the snares of wealth, from pinching want, and languid unenjoyed superfluity. You know, of old, my notions of matrimony, and how meanly I thought of the usual degree of happiness enjoyed by those who enter into willing subjection. This has proved an advantage to me, as I had no sanguine expectations to be disappointed; and, contrary I suppose to what happens to most people in similar circumstances, find more of the complacency and attention of the lover in the husband than ever I expected. We were indeed much mistaken in the character of our friend. He has neither the tranquillity nor the indifference we gave him credit for; wrapt up in his natural reserve, and a restraint arising from

some very particular circumstances, he baffled our penetration. Would you think it? He is generous, impetuous, and singularly acute in all his feelings. His delicacy is extreme: and he has as nice and jealous a sense of honour as any Spaniard whatever.

I once more cordially thank you for your last kind letter, which, by the by, does not satisfy me as to what you are about, and whether you think to remain in Ireland. I confess myself surprised at your staying there so long. Mr. G. begs to be cordially remembered to you. Offer my affectionate respects to your good mother, and believe me most kindly, most truly,

Yours.

LETTER XLII.

TO MISS EWING, LEITH.

Laggan, August 14, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I OBSERVE, with shame and concern, that I am so far fallen behind, that it is necessary for me, in the mercantile way, to acknowledge "your several favours duly received," viz. two from Edinburgh and one from Glasgow; besides one which I find is on the way, and daily (eagerly I assure you) expected.

T

You see where I am by the date of this. It is a month since I came, accompanied by my father and the awful man who tied the fatal knot. Christina, our old associate on *Drimen Duie*, was also there. They said they came to see whether "the said knot sat easy on the bound," &c. So these good folks departed, after assisting us to receive some ceremonious visitors, and left us to ourselves. Now it is time you should know who *ourselves* are. Know, then, that Mr. G.'s mother was in the house with him; remember, I have notified this in form, and expect additional congratulations on that account, for I should have been lost and bewildered on my entrance on such a new scene, as the government of more than half a dozen country servants, and the complicated economy of a farm, without such a monitress. You will not wonder that I am already very fond of my mother-in-law, when I tell you she is just what our dear Harriet will be thirty years hence, in mind and manner, and an expression in the faded beauty of her countenance that one might be tempted to call heavenly: such eyes you never saw, in a head that one may call a fine antique. It would fatigue you to describe the gauntlet we ran of visitation and re-visitation; though it might give room for a further display of my picturesque manner of conveying characters to you by comparison and analogy, I cannot as yet enlarge. My neighbours, the wild braes of Badenoch considered, are more than tolerable; some of them rise

to agreeable, and some soar up to very agreeable. This accounts for much of my time. The weather too has been so very fine, the lord of the cottage is so fond of walking, and I am so fond of accompanying him through the pleasantest of all meadows which surround us, that much time is wasted in that way; then there are the cares of a family, of which family I am hitherto very careless, but care will come too soon; then the early mornings are no longer mine, because, alas! I am no longer my own. Yet you shall always find me most affectionately
Yours.

LETTER XLIII.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Laggan, July, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

EVER pleasing and acceptable as your kind, kind letters are to me, your last was doubly so, arriving as it did most opportunely, "To cheer the heavy hours obscured by pain," and suggesting the comforting idea of your being not only in health but in better spirits than I have known you for some time past.

I am tired of quaint devices, and quite of your mind as to that of your ring. It shews the utmost humility, in the first place; and I am so

far from thinking with Jane, that it betrays a poverty of invention, that I am charmed with its simplicity. A pretty fanciful motto might apply to any body, but A. G. that significant cypher, is I myself, I ; and the laurel wreath enclosing it, may mean the perpetual verdure of friendship, or my invincible courage when I used to protect you from those cows whose armed foreheads used to fill you with such tender fears, pretty coward that you are. Were this memorial embellished with such fine sentences as you and I could easily make or steal, vanity and friendship might have equal claims ; but now 'tis an unequivocal offering to the sweet social power that has smiled so long upon us. I am glad the fashion of despising things, common and easily attained, is so prevalent ; infidelity and licentiousness will soon lose the charms of novelty and singularity, they will be so despicably common ; and religion and common sense will add lustre to their own weight, and be sought after as respectable oddities at least.

I enjoy, in your description, the entertainment you received on the bank of Carron's sounding stream, where Oscar, king of spears, rose bright in arms to curb the King of the world, and made the Roman Eagles stoop before the race of Morven. Time has been, when the "light of my soul arose" at the name of this young hero, so long deplored by Malvina ; so moaned by the sweet voice of Cona.

Receive your packet, all but the poetry ; these, being copies, and you possessed of the originals, I keep till you reclaim them. I am charmed with the freedom, ease, and gaiety, which reigned in your little society at Arran, and which has not passed uncelebrated, or unsung. The Laureat of Arran seems to wear his bays with becoming carelessness, and rather to laugh at than value himself for having them. He certainly possesses original genius, and a vein of humour not extremely refined, but genuine, easy, and Fergusonial. He has made his dog very eloquent, and, like another talking animal of old renown, he reproves the madness of his master with justice and severity.

How could it enter into that adamant heart of yours to keep me so long in suspense about a matter that concerns me so much to know? As for lovers, they are a generation born to be teased ; but me you shall tease no longer. Have you no compassion on the fatigues of my imagination, drawing numberless pictures of my friend that is to be? On pain of my displeasure, let his name, age, and complexion, be immediately forthcoming ; "let me not burst in ignorance, but tell me : " I will not whisper it to the rushes. In hopes of your speedy compliance,

I remain yours as you demean yourself.

LETTER XLIV.

TO MISS EWING, GLASGOW.

Fort Augustus, Nov. 6, 1781.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FROM this "region of silence and shade," I thought to have written at length and at leisure; but leisure so often slighted I now vainly solicit. I have been so engrossed by visitors, and engaged with preparing, for the loom, the purple and fine linen which my maids have been spinning in the Glens all summer, that I have not so much as wandered on the Loch side, or lounged in the garden since I came here. This last is now withered, but to my fancy it was so a month ago. I look at it as I suppose divorced people do at each other, when a little lurking love remains. I must forsake it, and all I love here, before nature opposes her irremovable bar. You will think I am talking very solemnly about travelling the twenty-five miles between here and Laggan; for I do not know that ever I told you how peculiarly we are situated with regard to each other. This district is divided from ours by an immense mountain called *Corryarrick*. That barrier is impassable in the depth of winter, as the top of it is above the region of clouds; and the sudden descent on the other side peculiarly dangerous, not only from deep snows concealing the unbeaten

track of the road, but from whirlwinds and eddies that drive the snow into heaps; besides an evil spirit which the country people devoutly believe to have dwelt there time out of mind.

I was rather urgent in requesting permission to make this visit, because my little daughter is here, who loves me and smiles on me irresistibly, and whom I must needs leave as a substitute for myself; and then I resolved to enjoy the last fading gleams of Autumn here, and embrace my dear parents before I should be separated from them all winter by this dreadful barrier. The society is varied by some new characters; not military ones, but just such harmless, good-humoured people as one takes pleasure in pleasing, and leaves without a pang. My mate has chosen this time to visit his Strathspey friends. I am beginning to be on the spur homeward; snow is now beginning to fall; but though I should "ride on clouds and skies," I must get home immediately.

Now I will give you a sketch of our situation, and you will say 'tis time. After crossing this awful mountain, we travel eastward through twelve miles of bleak inhospitable country, inhabited only by moor-fowl, and adorned with here and there a booth, erected for a temporary shelter to shepherds, who pass the summer with their flocks in these lonely regions. On leaving this waste, you enter a vale six miles in length, and half a mile broad, which wants nothing but wood to be

beautiful; it has indeed some copses, or what the Scottish bards call shaws. This vale consists entirely of rich meadow and arable lands, and has the clear and rapid Spey running through the middle of it. About the centre of this vale, at the foot of a mountain which screens it from the north wind, stands our humble dwelling; just such a cottage as that at Greenlaw, only higher, admitting of attick chambers for you to repose in.

You will wonder we have not the good house to which the Pastor's office entitles him. That should be built on the glebe, and can be no where else, and this glebe is a nook which none but a hermit would inhabit. Then we are so far from market, that, unless the ravens were commissioned to feed us, we could not do without a farm; which affording us every necessary of life, we send to Inverness (only fifty miles off) for elegancies and superfluities; elegant sugar, and superfluous tea, for instance. The last incumbent preferred getting this farm at an easy rate and living in a cottage of his own building, to a more elegant mansion without that advantage; and we have made the same sacrifice of vanity to convenience. We have a great extent of moor and hill grazing, where they say we may feed some hundreds of sheep, a very suitable flock for a person who ought to be much detached from secular cares, having a shepherd kept purposely to attend them. They require even in winter no food

or shelter, but what the hills afford. Our neighbours abound in courtesy and civility, and many of them, having been abroad in the army, are sufficiently intelligent. I remember before I knew any thing about these countries, being much delighted to hear of the Swiss ; who, they say, after serving in the French army, and sharing in all the gaieties of Paris, retire towards the decline of life to their own country, and there immediately and with alacrity resume their pristine, simple and hardy manners and habits. But there is no *amor patriæ* like that of mountaineers, every where. The people here so entirely resume their early modes of living and thinking, that they give probability to all we hear of those children of the rocks in other countries.

* * * * *

Now I feel I have tired you ; for when I flag I have always a happy consciousness of my own stupidity, and shall therefore bid you farewell, to write to one who will think all my nothings very interesting ; so indeed do you :—forgive, then, this implied preference, and believe, that I am to you unchangeable. Adieu.

LETTER XLV.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

(Formerly Miss EWING.)

Laggan, March, 1782.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE now to thank you for your long kind letter, and for introducing me to that most desirable place your fire-side. Long, long may the genius of domestick happiness smile in your chimney corner ! and, if in process of time, some other friendly genius should set me down smiling in the opposite corner, with you and your Caro laughing in the middle, and sister Jane and my Caro simpering together behind, we should form a charming groupe, and I should be as happy as is permitted to us in this probatory noviciate of being. This, perhaps, as we are all circumstanced, is a romantick wish ; but I have no notion of throwing cold water upon those glimmerings of hope which occasionally cheer and enliven one's gloomiest moments. From the more extended circle of your connexions, and your happiness in being the centring point of that circle, 'tis altogether impossible that you feel my absence as I do yours. But I know you will have influence enough to bring your beloved here, and that will be a second spring of the affections, and we shall then all know and love each other. This I

feel certain of. With you it rests to realize this cordial presentiment. Sure, people that can go through this cold world, unloving and unloved, do not feel its sorrows as I do, or they would sink under them. You inquire if I left Mary at Fort Augustus; I durst not do otherwise, she is so firmly established in the affections of the good old people, that it would be a breach of the peace to deprive them of her. This does not please her father, who is afraid of his dear daughter being spoiled, but, in fact, very unwilling to part with her, though he affects to be too manly to be fond of an infant; but he wants a pretence to lament her absence without descending from his dignity. For my own part, I honestly confess, that my heart ached at parting with her. I would not wish these human flowers to breathe their first fragrance on any breast but my own.

* * * * *

* * * * *

I am sorry to hear that the Naiads of my native Clyde have paid you such an abrupt visit. The more substantial water nymphs who inhabit the square temple of purity in the green could not be ruder. You dwellers in the Stockwell and Bridgegate must be an iniquitous generation to be so undated. We have, notwithstanding our primitive innocence and rural simplicity, met with a still severer shock, having had, for two months past, a winter as rigorous and terrible as those of the honest Laplanders, who, as the sweet singer

of Tiviot Dale tell us, "love their mountains, and enjoy their storms." I could have done so too, while they only afforded us a tremendous amusement, but now that our poor sheep are perishing in scores under the wreaths, I see it in a very different light. You will be very sorry to hear that our loss in this article has been considerable.

Now be correct, diligent, lively, and communicative; in short, be a peerless correspondent, for you are the link that holds me to Clydesdale; and if you break—But you never can, because you are the faithful friend of

Your ever affectionate.

LETTER XLVI.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

January 2, 1783.

WHEN I sit down to write to you, after this too long interval, and begin to taste the pleasure of reviving in this manner the delightful ease and tenderness of our past intercourse, my heart glows at the recollection, and I am surprised at myself for allowing so long a time to elapse, without indulging myself in so pure a satisfaction. But, when my crowd of worldly cares rush in to interrupt this delightful reverie, the fervours

of friendship, like those of a sublimer kind, are drowned in the clamours of the world. I never experienced so much of this tiresome turmoil, as since I wrote to you last. But before I proceed to my wonted egotism, let me acknowledge your kind letter, which, after lying in state two months at Perth, reached me when I too was lying in state; of which more hereafter.

I rejoice to hear that you are become

“The joyful mother of a hopeful son.”

How thankful should you be to Providence, which has enabled you to fulfil the first duty of that fond relation! I am sure you will pity me, who, though earnestly desirous, and in some respects well qualified, am not permitted to nurse; the wise people about me being of opinion that it would endanger my small stock of health at this season.

“He that’s convinc’d against his will,

“Is of the same opinion still.”

I shall have endless remorse, if any thing happens. My mother was kind enough to risk a winter journey over Corryarrick, and it is by her advice that Miss is sent to grass. I am anxious to hear more particular accounts of young master. Whom do the wise people say he resembles? I am sure they have discovered him to be either his father’s picture or his mother’s image, for these are the invariable phrases. I am truly obliged to Jane for her letter. ’Tis great charity in you and her to write on, without minding my suspensions. You

know I long ago remarked to you, that people get no extraordinary gifts, without having some extraordinary occasion for the exertion of them ; so it is with the spirit and fortitude of your left-handed hero, who it seems has had these heroick qualities not a little exercised. He seems to be a perfect Ulysses in his woes, his wanderings, and his perils. I hope the conclusion of them will be equally successful ; that he will escape the fury of the American Læstrigones, and enticements of the West Indian Lotophagi ; and that some fond and faithful Penelope will soothe and reward him after all these scenes of danger and distress are over. I send you a great, comprehensive benediction, including your brother and my dear Harriet. May every return of this season of good wishes, bring health and felicity to you and your beloved ! so prays, so wishes,

Your own, &c.

LETTER XLVII.

TO MRS. SMITH.

Laggan, August 7, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND !

I HOPE this will find you safely arrived in town with your mate, and relieved from all apprehensions about the *son of your love*. I have no doubt but your dear little sufferer has gone

through much distress ; but your timidity of temper makes me hope you have in fancy, aggravated the danger. I rejoice to think you are so partial to all my dear retreats, to Spey, Corryarrick, and, above all, to the lord of the cottage. I should not have died in peace unless you had seen and liked us all. I am quite gratified to think how much *you* please *him*. Nature, delicacy, and gentleness is all in all to him. He revolts at every shadow of affectation, and detects pretensions with a glance. I dare say in his whole lifetime, he never said a word, the intention of which was to bias any one in his favour. You must like him as he is, or not like him at all ; but I was sure you would and must like him. Never were two unpretending beings more congenial in their manner of thinking. He was extremely partial to your letters, before he saw you. You and he too have this in common, that you both appear to most advantage on paper, where your diffidence does not stand in your way. He admires my application of Collins's Address to Simplicity to you, and says you really are,

“ By nature taught,

“ To breathe her genuine thought

“ In language warmly pure and sweetly strong.”

Now the least thing you can do in return for all this, is to tell me how your beloved likes me, and the cottage, and so forth. What an ingrate he must be, if not partial to the wife of one who loves his wife so well, especially when the lady

in question is so well disposed towards him. My dear; we ought; as Caius says of Dr. Evans in the play, "to pray our pibles well," that matters happened as they did; nursing our delicacy and our affection as we did, in tender friendship and voluntary retirement, cultivating our taste to a degree which circumstances might have rendered very inconvenient, we should have been wretched caitiffs, had men fallen to our lot, such as the generality of our friends are very well satisfied with. For my own part, I could never have endured grossness, or indifference, or twenty things I see better people put up with, who do not seem to think there is the smallest occasion for common tastes and inclinations. In such a case, I think, "I would never tell my *hate*;" but, I dare say, concealment would, like an envious worm, "feed on my meagre cheek." Alas! how I play with a subject that should touch us both very nearly, when we think of her who has full as much feeling and delicacy as any of us, who always suffers, and never complains! With her disposition she would have been too happy, had she met, like us, with gentleness, attention, and indulgence.

"Turn, hopeless thought, turn from her."

Your other letter is come, and I am so pleased! I began to fret and wonder, and my very Caro, who hates impatience, began to look solemn and significant, and wonder if you were well. These post-horses are brutes void of all finer feelings; and, so far from improving by the literary com-

merce they are the means of carrying on, they seem insensible of the loads of information, consolation, and ratiocination they carry on their backs, and will not budge a foot faster to relieve even the impatience of lovers. For instance, your letter was full sixteen days on the way. I am sure you will be glad to hear that we have a delightful prospect of a fine harvest; flax in abundance, potatoes, your favourites, in superabundance, and "the breezes wave the ripening corn" in profuse luxuriance; but then you will be sorry again to hear, that for a few days past, all this fair promise of plenty was like to be drenched in floods of rain, and overwhelmed with the swelling of Spey. However, you must be glad again to hear that this is only the equinoctial storm, and that we still hope for good weather to enable us to rejoice in the blessings of Providence. Mr. G. joins in affectionate good wishes to your lord; I have no room or time for other remembrances; but, while I can think, I shall be faithfully yours.

LETTER XLVIII.

TO MRS. SMITH.

Laggan, August 18, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR kind letter, and the little volunteer that came with Jenny's, gave me more pleasure than you can imagine, considering what a variety

of pains and pleasures, engross, agitate, and divide me by turns. Before I enter on the subject of yours, I must tell you how we went to Fort George, in the little machine, and took Catharine with us, who was not alarmed, as on a former occasion when you were with us, but, on the contrary, seemed highly delighted with the journey, and all its accompaniments. The journey, by the by, was a very pleasant one, being a continued series of visits, as the road passed the houses of our connexions and friends all the way. The scene of the meeting between the two sisters was more pathetick, and less ludicrous, than the one you witnessed formerly. Their mutual joy and affection was really *edifying*. The eldest has made great improvements; so great that it would be no wonder if, like other little prodigies, she should disappoint all expectation. There is a lady, whom I heard lately speak on the subject, who is so impressed with the idea of premature children's disappointing hope, that she told me, with great tartness, she never liked *prodigys*, and was very glad there were no *prodigys* in their family. Fort George is a gay and polite place; the society well bred and agreeable, and the neighbourhood populous and pleasant. I made a short excursion to Ross-shire, saw the pretty little town of Fortrose, and the coast of that fine country, thickly planted with gentlemen's seats, being the residence of the powerful clans of Ross and Mackensie - - - - -

So, after spending three weeks very agreeably at the Fort, we set out very early, before the *bairns* rose, to avoid the struggle of parting; because both their hearts were set on coming home with us, and we had settled to leave Catharine there, for her improvement in the elegancies of the English tongue. I do not speak of conquering our Scotch, alias Dorick, dialect, the sweet simplicity of which I think pleasing in a child; but you are to know, that I make a point of making my mountain nymphs speak the language of the mountains in the first place. I am all anti-Pinkerton, and delight in Celtick. You cannot think what a source of pleasure my little acquaintance with that emphatick and original language has afforded me. I am determined my children shall all drink "from the pure wells of Celtick undefiled." They shall taste the animated and energetic conversation of the natives; and an early acquaintance with the poetry of nature shall guard them against false taste and affectation. I never desire to hear an English word out of their mouths till they are four or five years old. How I should delight in grafting elegant sentiments and just notions on simple manners and primitive ideas! This is just the *forte-piano* character that we always wish for, and seldom meet. How, indeed, should we? People, whose circumstances confine them to breed their children at home, are so apt to have them spoiled for want of culture, and by vulgar association. Then, if they send them

to the common seminaries, there are so many of them together, spoiling each other with trifling conversation; and the love of vanity and dress rages like a contagion; their manners, nay, their very ideas, are so artificial, that their minds and manners, wear a tiresome uniform. Now, I am going to make an experiment on my mountain nymphs. If it fails, your laughing at me will be only the smallest part of my mortification. Know, then, that I propose, in the first place, to attend, above all things to the culture of the heart: and at leisure, and in due time, to the understanding; and, having secured these main points, to let the manners, in a great measure, shift for themselves. I pre-suppose a tolerable good disposition, and some degree of sensibility; and, taking these for granted, I cannot easily believe that an unpolluted mind, unaccustomed to fear from without, or reproach from within, bred in the centre of kindness and confidence, and having all its best affections constantly exercised, I cannot, I say, suppose any other than soft and artless manners to flow spontaneously from such a mind, so formed, and so circumstanced; especially, when unaccustomed to vulgar language, and, what is far more degrading, vulgar sentiments, which I have heard conveyed in very good language from very pretty mouths. Even the strong temptation of wandering in my favourite path can scarce excuse this long scamper. So we set out, as I told you, and, after proceeding five or six miles, spent the rest

of the morning in surveying the antiquities of Calder Castle, a venerable and gloomy edifice of grey renown; for this is the Cawdor of Macbeth, and it was a few miles to the south of it, that the witches anticipated his titles. I fancy their hag-ships resided hereabouts; at any rate, I am sure the demon of black-despairing melancholy dwells in some of those caverns that echo the roar of Calder water. The house has no other inhabitant at present than an old Sybil, who lives in the cellar, and some legions of rooks and daws in the lofty towers, that add strength and horror to this antique dwelling. You enter over a very narrow drawbridge, laid across a deep chasm, we saw some good paintings, and tapestry frightfully fine; for Pharaoh was there driving so furiously after the Israelites, and the Red Sea rushing so fiercely upon Pharaoh, that you started back instinctively, not knowing which to fear most. Small gothick "windows, that admit no light, and passages that lead to nothing," or, at most, to a small dark room with a thick heavy door, strengthened with iron; these, and resounding dusky halls, and narrow winding staircases, give no very high idea of the enjoyments of the virtuous and stately dames, who wrought tapestry here in the days of feudal grandeur, and perpetual hostility. You are shewn, in a very high tower, the self-same bed in which Duncan, of pious memory, was murdered by Macbeth. It was brought from Inverness, on the demolition of the castle there. The fact

Duncan's being killed in it is hard to establish ; but the bed is certainly unique in itself, and very unlike the beds of these degenerate days. It is, in the first place, very large, and exactly square ; it is magnificent in its own way, yet it is evident that curtains were an unknown luxury when it was framed ; the wooden canopy which forms the roof is surrounded by a moulding or cornice two feet deep at least, of wood exquisitely carved in flowers, with many imitations of palm and pine branches, and good store of thistles. Round the frame of the bed, or bedstead, which is very low, though the canopy be lofty, is another moulding seemingly formed to prevent the possibility of his majesty's tumbling out. This, too, is richly carved ; so are the posts, and certain raised ornaments, not inelegantly representing branches at the corners. In short, the expense of carving this bed, if the artist's recompense was adequate to his labour and ingenuity, might purchase the most costly curtains. From the battlements of the Castle you see, in the back ground, a thick forest, old beyond history or memory, and solemn beyond imagination. Tremendous rugged rocks appear emerging from the wood ; on one side you see the chasm and drawbridge aforesaid ; on the other the river Calder, dark in its colour, and devious in its course, howling, groaning, and boiling through a rocky channel, worn into many dismal pits and cauldrons : at the foot of that rock on which the house stands, 'tis so deep and dark,

that it dizzies one to look down from the tower. In short, the gloomy pools below, and pendant branches above, might almost tempt a love-sick maiden, or fog-sick Englishman, to hanging or drowning. There is a wide view towards the sea, including the heath where the weird sisters announced the fatal career of successful ambition to Macbeth, whom I always figure to myself saying, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" After looking down with complacency on the numerous families of ravens, whom we used to look up to at a great distance, in the vast old elms that were planted, before the union at latest, round this venerable pile, we quitted Calder, with an emotion of gratitude for being born in happier times; when high-born dames and barons bold are no longer forced to seek security from rugged manners, and feudal outrage, in those terrifick mansions. Now, after this hopeful outset, consider what a fair field of description lies before you, for this is only the morning scene; and, after performing an *act of recollection* on the moor, the whole *country* of Strathspey opened upon us—Castle Grant, the surrounding pleasure grounds and gardens, which are very fine, though surmounted by rude environs. There are numerous paintings there, to my great *delectation*. Some of these are very characteristick of the amiable propensity of this family, to cherish the inferior gentry and their humble relations, who "dwelt under their shadow." There is a pleasant sum-

mer parlour, opening, with a glass door, to the garden, the walls of which are entirely covered with the portraits of those lesser gentry around, who were attached, many of them, by the double tie of kindred and feudal subjection. This last was rather patriarchal sway, as they managed it. Never, surely, was power so gently used, or protection so gratefully acknowledged. Those endearing, though invisible and undefinable ties, that have for generations held these people so strongly to each other, and to their chief, produce united effects, which afford one of the most pleasing views of human nature that can be met with. The family, luckily for you, were from home, but had left their effigies behind. Caro was quite charmed to see with what reverence I beheld his kindred shades. He is to-night extremely anxious about saving my poor eyes. So it shall suffice, that the castle is a spacious, convenient, and elegant mansion, where many heroes of the family, "on animated canvass seem to frown;" and where every thing evinces an abode, where baronial pomp and hospitality still continue to linger, softened by the milder graces of modern elegance. These eyes I must save, and therefore I bid you heartily good night, and will begin a new letter to-morrow; for if once I resume the reins of government, I shall not lay them down for landscape painting. Adieu! my true friend.

LETTER XLIX.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, August 19, 1785.

AGAIN I resume, and I insist on being allowed some merit in resuming, when the meadows, glittering with dew, the ascending larks, the fresh flowers, and the curling mists that climb the opposite mountain, all invite me out to enjoy the sweetest hour of day, the soft shadowy twilight excepted. You know not how sweet and sacred the hour is that I devote to you.—To return to Strathspey. We spent two days with a relation of Mr. G.'s, and on Sunday went to hear my old friend's lord preach. After sermon, we went in, and with difficulty escaped their kind compulsion, for we were engaged. She* becomes the holy state very well; seemed composed and cheerful, domesticated, and in a fair way of being rusticated. Strathspey is quite a civilized country, compared to this, and has a good neat village in it, where the father of the district has been cherishing some exotick manufactures, which do not seem to find the soil congenial. In fact, a Highlander never sits at ease at a loom; 'tis like putting a deer in the plow. We made a circuit of two

.....
 * Beatrice, to whom an epistle is addressed in the author's poetical volume, and who is married to a clergyman in Strathspey.

days more, and then came home, and found all well and happy. I am glad to hear such good accounts of John Beverly, who, I trust, will do credit to my recommendation. He appears a well disposed boy, strongly marked with the true English character of sincerity, integrity, and plain sound sense. ----- So much for this subject. Rochefoucault says, very ill-naturally, that people always find consolation very easily for the misfortunes of their friends. Painful experience assures me of the contrary. My very spirit is wounded by my dear Harriet's accumulated sorrows; and reflection, instead of soothing, aggravates my affliction. When I think over all our early friendship, animated by the ardour natural to that innocent age, on her side so pure and genuine; when I think on all her truth, her gentleness and meekness, and the dignity and delicacy that were intuitive (for of *whom* should she learn them?) My dear soul, you never knew her so well as I did. The powers of her understanding, and the graces of her mind, never met with the sunshine of encouragement. At the very time when they were expanding, we know how she was secluded from improvement, and crushed by arbitrary harshness. What a moderate degree of prosperity would have been happiness to a spirit so regulated and so tranquil! but, alas! to sink under the cold hand of poverty, and have so many innocent sufferers looking up to her, (I greatly fear, too, that he who should support and com-

fort her is by no means what we would wish him to be,) we know not even what to say to her. Sympathy, so sweet, so soothing, in other cases, avails not here. For, to a person who has so much delicate pride, when one cannot alleviate pecuniary distress, 'tis insulting to mention it. What shall we, what can we, do for our friend? Remember us with much esteem to your beloved. Accept the kindest wishes towards you and yours from Charlotte. What a tide of information you must pour in upon me, in return for this descriptive effort in folio. Be conscientious, and then you will not be concise. Adieu!

LETTER L.

TO MISS JANE EWING, AT GLASGOW.

Laggan, March 1, 1786.

MY DEAR JANE,

I HOPE this will find you safely returned from England, much improved by your travels, and so replenished with candour and good nature, that you will excuse my sending this by the post; which, I protest, proceeds from no hostile design against your purse, nor from any vain conceit that you will have here the value of your sixpence; but to relieve me from a weight of perplexity and concern that I can support no longer. But in case there should have been mistakes or misap-

prehensions, I shall give you a clear retrospective view of the whole state of our correspondence since Mr. G. brought me your May letter. Now, my dear, I think, no scruple can remain; and I beg of you, by all that is dear and friendly, to send me, by the very next post, sixpenny worth of your own characteristick truth and intelligence.

New objects, new pleasures, and new attachments obtrude themselves so frequently, from the very nature of the gay shifting scene around you, that 'tis no wonder they should insensibly exclude the old ones, whose distance, both in regard to time and place, make them appear remote even to your imagination. But how different is my situation! Placed on a serene and distant eminence, whence I view the toils and pleasures of the gay and busy world with tranquil unconcern, I am absorbed in the delightful contemplation of those virtues and graces, either budding into hope or arriving at maturity, which my partial fondness fancies in those who are united to me by those tender ties which nature forms and sentiment rivets. Thus, free from the tyranny of caprice and custom, thus, disincumbered of those hollow friendships, the offspring of interest or vanity, which divide the attention without sharing the heart, I have balanced and closed up my books of attachment, am scarce so sanguine as to expect I shall find truth and sensibility enough to induce me to open them for the reception of a new ob-

ject; and proud and pleased to think, that I have bartered away my affections for such advantageous bargains of merit and real friendship. I have now, like an opulent trader, retiring to my country house, placed my fortune (of friends) in the stocks (i. e. my heart,) and it is become my great speculation, like theirs, to watch the rise and fall of the funds; and, to tell you the truth, I begin to fear having fallen much below par with you.—Pray allow me here, however foreign the subject may seem to you, to claim your sympathy in the deep concern I feel for the death of my friend Christina Macpherson. Her departure was very sudden; she was nursing her second son, was attacked by a kind of fever incident to nurses, (though rarely fatal,) and died the second day. You can't think how I was affected by her loss, though already lost to me in an unequal marriage. Her sense was strong and masculine; her sentiments just and liberal, though neither soft nor polished; and her affection for me, such as now wrings my heart to remember. What a deep and dismal chasm is left in the imagination, when the mind wanders in search of what is torn for ever from its grasp, and, for the open heart and melting eye of friendship, meets only the solitary mansions of the dead! Now that I am in the figurative mood, you must indulge one more allusion to the sybil's books, which increased in value as they decreased in number. Even thus it is with my dear remaining friends; so you may

contemplate your own importance as a volume of increasing value. C.* goes on improving amazingly; she has an uncommon memory, lively and delicate feelings, and a strong desire to please and excel. Her junior has much pastoral expression of countenance, which, in the Arcadian language, means gentleness and innocence. She is prudent, regular, and exact in all her little transactions. J. L. is a great lump of generosity and good-nature, and shrewd withal: whose mind, I take it, will be as open as his countenance. P. has a more marked countenance than any of them; his features are regular, and, for a boy, delicate: he has much fire and alertness about him. He was very healthy, and so quiet that it was a pleasure to nurse him; which pleasure, however, was interrupted by a severe attack of the rheumatism. He now walks, and speaks many words. Apologies for egotism between you and me are affected and unnecessary. Of whom or of what can I write here so interesting to you as myself? and the same holds from you to me. Caro sends many, very many, and kind compliments to you all. This letter is levelled partly at you and partly at your sister; the very idea of her neglect is wounding. Remember me with esteem to all your brothers, and to your mother; and let me know by next post, whether you think it of importance that I am yours unalterably.

.....

* These passages refer to the author's children.

LETTER LI.

TO MISS JANE EWING.

Laggan, July 5, 1786.

MY DEAR JANE,

WITH all due gratitude I acknowledge your three letters, which, from a travelled lady, just arrived from England, to a rusticated highland matron, are no small marks of condescension. But you will never assume a character, and have not been long enough from home to acquire a new one. The merit of your kindness is augmented by considering what small returns of entertainment you have to expect.

We here have been all in a hurry with publick amusements for this fortnight past. You will be quite at a loss to conjecture of what kind they could be. Rouns (sales) then, are a source of great amusement here, and a very expensive one to the roun-makers. At the dissolution of any family, by the death or removal of its head, it is customary here to send letters of invitation to all the connexions which inter-marriages have created to the defunct for a century past in the neighbouring counties, inviting them to countenance the ceremony by their presence. This invitation tacitly includes an expectation, warranted by old custom, that these allies, as they call them, will purchase things rather beyond their value. The

wealth of the family consisting in the number of their cattle, and their pride in the number of their connexions, the one come to purchase the other, and both are displayed in their full extent. Whether it can be well afforded or not, there is always a plentiful dinner, and very plentiful drink on these occasions, which the friendly greetings of so many people, bound by a common tie, frank, lively, and not deficient in that good breeding which habitual kindness and courtesy forms, render no unpleasing scene to those who witness the conclusion of it. It is indeed a very joyous one. Besides the entertainment for the superior class, there is always a plentiful distribution of bread and cheese and whisky to the peasantry whose cheerfulness never exceeds the bounds of respect and decorum. The general good humour diffused by this meeting of numbers, who know and like each other, though they do not often mingle, and the emulation of good will to the entertainers, generally raise things to a great price. Though you want nothing, you must appear to countenance the business; a refusal on such an occasion would be thought as odd in the highland *monde*, as it would be in the *beau monde*, to refuse an invitation to stand and be shot at. You always hear Highlanders talk of *countries*; but did I ever tell you what our countries are? not by any means parishes, counties, or any such divisions as you are used to: a country here means a habitable track, divided by rocks, mountains, and nar-

row passes, from the adjacent countries, and inhabited by a particular clan. These, in places where only two or three miles of rocky eminence separate them, differ in looks, language, and manners, more than you can imagine possible; nay, they affect to differ; for bordering clans often live in bitter and jealous rivalry; and though individuals love, and sometimes marry each other, the general dislike continues. Different clans, in their collective capacity, form strict alliances with each other, and are cordial in their attachment; but they are those who live at a distance from each other, and cannot interfere about hunting, hill-pasture, &c. The Grants and Macleans, for instance. But to return to our rous. We were not, on this occasion, presented with the usual spectacle of festivity mingling with the grief of the widow and orphans. The first was that of a person who died childless; and, from the caprice of his nature, never could enjoy the gifts of fortune; though he was, at the same time, a man of such upright intentions, that we all acquiesced most patiently in his removal, hoping he would find that peace in happier regions which eluded his grasp in this discordant world. After picking the bones of our departed neighbour, we all set out to eat the chieftain up alive; for you must know he is a Colonel of the Guards, and took a fancy to live on his estate two years ago—built a new house, and brought fashionable furniture from London. For half a year,

he lived hospitably *in the abode of his fathers*; but wishing to have his domain improved and planted, and aspiring, as every Colonel does, to die a General, he has let it for ten years to a judicious and noted improver, on condition of having it restored with hundreds of dykes, thousands of drains, and ten thousands of trees upon it. Judge, then, how you will find the scenery tamed and improved when you return. To make way for this arrangement, every article of cattle and furniture was sold. The *rouph* lasted a week. There were several of our connexions from Strathspey there. We had a cold collation there every day, and as many strangers every night at our own house as it would accommodate. When all this was over, we paid a round of visits with the Grants, before their departure. Curtis was nearly blown up in the *Cæsar* man of war, and is come home from that scene of wealth and corruption, with his mind unspoiled and his pockets empty. I am told he is doing well enough in his original profession. He will be happier, but the world will not think so. My cousin, whom you have seen, is returned from India, perfectly qualified to talk of

“Antres vast, and deserts wild,”

for he returned over land. He passed through Syria, and was half a year in Cyprus, and returned by Marseilles. He, too, has failed of enriching himself in the modern Ophir; but I question whether he will bear the privations that obscurity

is heir to, as well as the philosophick Curtis, who is too wise for ambition, and too calm to be disturbed by the fervors of imagination. I will write to your sister from the leisure of the Fort; and in the mean time, give you joy of the conclusion of this long tiresome letter, and bid you heartily, Adieu.

LETTER LII

TO MRS. SMITH.

Fort George, July 30, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE been long meditating a stroke at your sixpence, but still deferred it till I should leave home, and reach this haven of tranquillity; where, amidst the sound of fifes and drums, and small arms, I seek that quiet and leisure which I look for in vain amidst the more discordant tumults of the nursery; where the thorough bass of the bull and the old sow, from without, and the shrill treble accompaniment of the pigs and poultry, form a complete anti-concert. Not that I mean to complain of the country, for, jesting apart, I never enjoyed it more than I did this past summer, notwithstanding the constant fatiguing exertion which my situation demands. You, who are the repository of all my complaints, know

very well what a wretched invalid I was all last winter ; but the spring, the sun, and health returning all together, and that so mild and sweet a spring as I never saw in this northern climate, you cannot think how suddenly I benefited from its reviving and gladdening influence. Then my little boy, the finest creature you ever saw, began to run about earlier than any I ever had, and, from being a trouble, became a pleasure and amusement to the whole family. My eldest came down here in May, where he is to remain, being the darling of his grandfather's affections ; so that we have none to disturb us but the two girls and little *Pickle*. We had the warmest, brightest summer imaginable ; and when the busy cares of day were done, we used to saunter every evening, by Spey, till eleven o'clock, through meadows *literally* flowery, for you never saw such a luxury of sweets. There too

“ Quiet waters, soft and slow,
Along the verdant landscape flow.”

It was then and there that we tasted, with the highest relish, the true enjoyment of minds detached from the world, may I add, somewhat raised above it—“ In that kind school, where no proud master reigns, the full free converse of the mutual heart, improving and improved.” But need I describe this kindly intercourse to you, who understand it so well, and who love, as much as I do, to cherish the remembrance of scenes and conversations never to be recalled, but always to be regret-

ed ; where that love of sincerity, of nature, and of virtue, which charmed and united us, expanded our hearts, and excluded the scandal, tittle-tattle about fashions and coxcombs, and jealous malignity, which so frequently engross the tête-à-têtes of misses in and out of their teens. You know me made of digressions, and will therefore excuse this long one. After being so long rusticated, and used to quite a different manner of life, and style of conversation, you cannot imagine how I was struck with the difference, in manners, dress, and language, between the people I found here, and those whom I left behind. I speak singularly, for Mr. G. is not with me. We are building a new church, and an addition to our cottage, for the reception of these new comers who visit us so frequently, I mean the *bairns*. When my mate left me, he parted with such reluctance, and so many charges of quick return, that he reminded me of Milton's Adam on the fatal morning of the transgression.—To return to the garrisonians. You can imagine no set of people more polished, powdered, *tonified* and *englified*, than they are. That rage for elegance, that passion for shew, that frenzy for false refinement and artificial luxury, which marks the age, burns here in full ardour. No wonder, when it has banished decorum, regularity, and decent frugality from the sober haunts of commerce, and even obtruded itself, with all its disquiets and dangers, into the more sacred asylums of rural tranquillity, that this pas-

sion triumphs here, where it has nothing to obstruct its progress ; for the permanent parts of the community are so very idle, and so much accustomed to the company of a successive variety of military beaux, who arrive with fresh cargoes of vanity and fashionable impertinence, that the ladies here are as great adepts in the modish chit-chat, the modish games, &c. as any of their sisters in Grosvenor-square. Add to this, an assumed vivacity, and continual pretension to wit, supported by a mechanical giggle, which every one has equally at command. This, no doubt, is a caricature, which the splenetick turn of reflection, produced by retirement, with a sickly habit, has aggravated. But now for the reverse of the medal. These people are certainly pleasant, easy, and elegant, though not totally free from affectation. Then, considering they are so entirely unoccupied, and living so much together, 'tis wonderful to observe the harmony that prevails, and the decorum they observe towards each other. Even in absence, they have upon the whole less malignity and slander than any small society I ever knew or heard of. Though they have not warmth for real and tender friendship, yet their manners are so far smoothed and softened by that politeness which is the ape and substitute of benevolence, that they keep all rancour within decent bounds. Indeed they float down the tide of dissipation so quick, from one wave of amusement to another, that they cannot be much in earnest

in their love or their anger. You will wonder who these residents are. They consist of the staff, four invalid companies, and a company of artillery. Dear peaceful home ! where all is native and unsophisticated. This will make me more sensible of the value of my dominion there.

- - - - - I have at last written to Harriet since my arrival here. I only deferred in hopes of sending some trifles, which might be serviceable.

- - - - You know she is in one sense very proud, and so are all people of great delicacy.

* * * * *

I never repined at my lot for want of any luxury, but the divine one, of bestowing where I love.

- - - - Tell her what she will scarce believe, so jealous are the unfortunate, that she is as dear to me as ever, though I have not the means to convince her of it.—Tell me what sort of being Willy has chosen to divide his heart and loaf with.—I have a line from my sovereign just now, upbraiding my delay ; and charging me to meet him in his own Strathspey. I will stay there some days, having a grand visit to make. Adieu.

LETTER LIII.

TO MRS. SMITH, LINT-HOUSE.

Laggan, August 27, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE long Lint-house letter you promised me is not yet arrived. I have been for a month at my *Lint-house*, alias Fort George ; where being in some measure disengaged from the perpetual hurry which always surrounds me at home, I find leisure to gratify the strong inclination I always feel, to write to you. Taking it for granted, that in the present case, you not only excuse but require egotism. I will endeavour to explain to you the nature of that bustle, and perplexity of affairs, which I complain of so often, and so justly. Having a great deal to do is not altogether the thing ; that, too, abridges my time for amusements of this nature ; but 'tis having a great deal to think of, to contrive, and to plan out, that plagues me. 'Tis acting in a variety of characters and capacities scarce compatible with each other. I must, after seven years experience, confess, with deep mortification, and due reverence for that exalted character, that the person who would be a notable housewife, must be that individual thing only, and not mar the main affair by an attempt to introduce separate and subordinate excellencies. She must not even, in any

sense, be a tender wife, or attentive mother. She must not walk about with her husband, or be his evening companion in conversation or other amusements ; she must not spend her time in instructing her children, nor attend to the forming of their minds : their food, clothing, and health is all she must attend to. You Lowlanders have no idea of the complicated nature of Highland farming, and of the odd customs which prevail here. Formerly, from the wild and warlike nature of the men, and their haughty indolence, they thought no rural employment compatible with their dignity, unless, indeed, the plow. Fighting, hunting, lounging in the sun, musick, and poetry, were their occupations ; for the latter, though you would not think it, their language is admirably adapted. This naturally extended the women's province both of labour and management. The care of the cattle was peculiarly theirs. Changing their residence so often as they did in summer, from one bothy or glen to another, gave a romantick peculiarity to their turn of thought and language. Their manner of life, in fact, wanted nothing but the shades of palm, the olives, the vines, and the fervid sun of the East, to resemble the patriarchal one. Yet, as they must carry their beds, food, and utensils, the housewife, who furnishes and divides these matters, has enough to do when her shepherd is in one glen, and her dairy-maid in another with her milk-cattle. Not to mention some of the children, who are marched

off to the glen as a discipline, to inure them early to hardiness and simplicity of life. Meanwhile, his reverence, with my kitchen damsel and the plowman, constitute another family at home, from which all the rest are flying detachments, occasionally sent out and recalled, and regularly furnished with provisions and forage. The effect, you know, often continues when the cause has ceased ; the men are now civilized in comparison to what they were, yet the custom of leaving the weight of every thing on the more helpless sex continues, and has produced this one good effect, that they are from this habit less helpless and dependent. The men think they preserve dignity by this mode of management ; the women find a degree of power or consequence in having such an extensive department, which they would not willingly exchange for inglorious ease. What these occupations are, you cannot comprehend from a general description ; but, as it is an hour to breakfast-time, and I find myself in the humour of journalizing and particularizing, I shall, between fancy and memory, sketch out the diary of one July Monday. I mention Monday, being the day that all dwellers in glens come down for the supplies. Item, at four o'clock, Donald arrives with a horse loaded with butter, cheese, and milk. The former I must weigh instantly. He only asks an additional blanket for the children, a covering for himself ; two milk tubs, a cog, and another spoon, because little Peter threw one of the

set in the burn ; two stone of meal, a quart of salt ; two pounds of flax for the spinners, for the grass continues so good that they will stay a week longer. He brings the intelligence of the old sow's being the joyful mother of a dozen pigs, and requests something to feed her with. All this must be ready in an hour ; before the conclusion of which comes Ronald, from the high hills, where our sheep and young horses are all summer, and only desires meal, salt, and women with shears, to clip the lambs, and tar to smear them. He informs me that the black mare has a foal, a very fine one ; but she is very low, and I must instantly send one to bring her to the meadows. Before he departs, the tenants who do us services come ; they are going to stay two days in the oak wood, cutting timber for our new byre, and must have a competent provision of bread, cheese, and ale for the time they stay. Then I have Caro's breakfast to get, Janet's hank to reel, and a basket of clues to dispatch to the weaver ; K—'s lesson to hear, her sampler to rectify ; and all must be over before eleven : while his reverence, calm and regardless of all this bustle, wonders what detains me, urging me out to walk, while the soaring larks, the smiling meadows, and opening flowers, second the invitation ; and my imagination, if it gets a moment loose from care, kindles at these objects with all the eagerness of youthful enthusiasm. My tottering constitution, my faded form and multiplying cares, are all forgotten, and

I enjoy the pause from keen exertion, as others do gaiety and mirth. How happy, in my circumstances, is that versatile and sanguine temper, which is hoping for a rainbow in every cloud ; nay, so prevalent is this disposition, that were a fire to break out in the offices, and burn them all down, I dare say the first thing that would occur to me, would be to console myself by considering how much ground would be manured by all these fine ashes. Now I will not plague you with a detail of the whole day, of which the above is a competent specimen. Yet spare your pity ; for this day is succeeded by an evening so sweetly serene, our walk by the river is so calmly pleasing, our lounge by the burnside so indolently easy, our conversation in the long-wished for hour of leisure so interesting, sliding so imperceptibly from grave to gay ; and then our children ! Say you wish me more ease and leisure, but do not pity me. Pity with me is like advice with some ; I am readier to give than to take it. Adieu ! dear and true friend.

LETTER LIV.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Sept. 5, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE just had the pleasure of your short, and Mrs. Brown's longer letter. You have

not been good *bairns* this summer. Have you not the grace to consider this is my hurried season? Could I command time, you would be teased with my redundancies. Indeed I have nothing to send you from hence very interesting to town belles. Yet what maketh us to differ, to use Mrs. Hervy's apposite phrase, if we, with our long-established friendship, find no more to interest us in each other, than people incapable of that generous sentiment? Why is spleen, or, to use a more fashionable word, *ennui*, the peculiar disease of fine ladies and fine gentlemen, but because they, of all mortals, cannot have their minds stirred up, and kept in motion, by any thing but what relates to their darling selves? Avarice and vanity are the passions which, by turns, sway and agitate them. The card-table exercises the one, and a rotation of publick places, filled, as they think, with their admirers, the other. Languor, apathy, and the horrors, fill up, by turns, the dismal interval. How different is the case with those whom the polite world regards with pity, as beings lost in oblivion, &c. &c. because their cares and pleasures are confined to their own family and particular friends! Yet how animated, how endearing is that circle, to those capable of tasting it with unvitiated relish, with genuine truth, and warmth of feeling! The eye cannot turn, without meeting with the expression of reverence, sympathy, or tenderness, in some countenance we love; the most ordinary occurrence

excites hopes and fears, pleasure or disquiet, because it must in some degree, affect those who engross and animate our wishes. Hay-making is not merely drying grass ; it is preparing a scene of joyous employment and innocent amusement for those whose sports recal to us our gayest, happiest days. Planting is not merely raising shrubs or trees, so familiar that they excite no new pleasurable idea ; it is preparing shelter, and unfolding beauties, for those human blossoms, whose dawning sweetness, whether real or imaginary, we contemplate with blameless rapture. Excuse this rhapsody. 'Tis an attempt at contrasting a life of what is thought harmless dissipation, with that peaceful privacy, where the voice of the heart is heard, and attended to. Why do you not tell me what kind of a wife Jenny makes ? whether she takes maternal consequence to herself ; who that was ill is grown better, and who that was wicked has repented ; who has begun to go to sermons on week days, and who has left off attending them on Sundays ? We have been, by turns so moral and playful, that, now our name is up, if we should deal a little in censure and tittle-tattle, we can go on, and keep our credit, on the strength of past good behaviour. Where is Dunlop-street, and what sort of a house have you in it ? and do you still keep Watts on the Passions beside you, by way of precaution ; and do you continue your laudable attention to the *wee* prophets, or do you not rather tell them, in these busy days, that, “at a

more convenient season, you will hear them ?” You see how present, all past mirth and sorrow, sports and seriousness, are to me ; yet you will gravely talk of my neglecting you, ungrateful being as you are.

* * * * *

I give you this commission, to me important, because, I think, if a suitable place could be found for my charge,* she might improve in many respects ; and I should flatter myself, that going now and then to publick places, and associating with other young people, will cheer her dejected spirits, and prevent her taking a turn too thoughtful for her age. I would wish her to pass four or five months in town, and return to me in summer. Adieu, in haste, my dear friend. Mr. G. has learnt to think of you as I do, and sends his love. Dispose of mine where you know it due. Farewell again.

.....

* The young lady here alluded to, and who is frequently mentioned afterwards, by the name of Charlotte, was a relation of the minister of Laggan, in whose family she for many years found a home. She was much admired for beauty of countenance, and singular elegance, both of person and manners, in which dignity and softness were happily blendid ; while in her mind the soundest sense and firmest rectitude supported and directed each other.

LETTER LV.

TO MRS. BROWN,
(formerly Miss JANE EWING.)

Laggan, October 10, 1788.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN !

I WILL lose no time in thanking you for the very friendly and interesting part you take in all that concerns me, of which I have a recent proof in your attention to poor Charlotte's concerns. If I live till the time of her return, next year, I hope to have the pleasure of telling you in person, somewhere or other, how affectionate a sense I retain of all your kindness. You seem so engrossed with this same *Caro* of yours, that you appear quite unconcerned in what passes round you, and never give a word of *nouvelles* to one who languishes in obscurity, and moreover, in total ignorance of what the Clydesdale world is doing ; which is all the world to me. If you did but know how it renews my youth, and awakens *the light of my soul*, to recollect

“Those happy days, beyond recovery fled !”
Not that the present are unhappy, or at all so inanimate as you may imagine. If you would tell what you are all about, I would, for instance, tell you how the bard of bards, who reached the mouldy harp of Ossian from the withered oak of Selma,

and awakened the song of other times, is now moving, like a bright meteor, over his native hills; and while the musick of departed bards awakes the joy of grief, the spirits of departed warriors lean from their bright clouds to hear, and a thousand lovely maids descend from the hill of roes, and pour forth the tears of beauty to the woes of Malvina; while the fair mourner of Lutha rejoices in the presence of her love, to hear his fame resound once more from Albion's cliffs to the green vales of Erin, &c. &c. &c. The bard, as I was about to tell you, is as great a favourite of fortune as of fame, and has got more by the old harp of Ossian, than most of his predecessors could draw out of the silver strings of Apollo. He has bought three small estates in this country within these two years, given a ball to the ladies, and made other exhibitions of wealth and liberality. He now keeps a Hall at Belleville, his new-purchased seat, where there are as many shells as were in Selma, filled, I doubt not, with much better liquor. - - - - - I make no apology for haste and inaccuracy. 'Tis a fine harvest-day, and I write with my son in my lap. Adieu, my dear friend. Accept *our* best wishes for your chosen, and assure him I consider him as a new and near connexion.

I am always much yours.

LETTER LVI.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, December 25, 1788.

(Ink frozen by the fire.)

FESTIVALS I always choose for writing to you, for then I am at leisure. Doubly so to-day, for my lord and sovereign is out, at a meeting of country gentlemen, and has left me here starving in such intense weather, as none but ultra-Grampians have any conception of. I hope Charlotte has given you my Dalwhinny epistle; a very meritorious one too, considering what a cold vigil I kept to write it. I long much to hear how far she answers to the sketch I gave you of her. If I were less happy in my family, I should be inconsolable for want of her. Even the *inexhaustible* fund of *entertainment* I possess in them, can scarce alleviate my chagrin for her departure. She, to whose mind early sorrow had given early ripeness, was unusually domestick and companionable. Her having no great compass of acquired knowledge, or powers of imagination, was rather an advantage in our retirement, because she could attend to common things, and be interested in such occurrences, as a person soaring in the balloon of romantick elevation could not descend to. Then she has a very pleasing vein of humour, which I would call peculiar, but that it in some degree resembles Caro's.

She has not his singular vein of delicate irony, but rallies very like him ; and, like him too, is very much awake to the ludicrous, and very quick-sighted in detecting all pretensions. She is, like him too, invariably true, neither deceived nor deceiving. Sound judgment, indeed, is the *forte* of these relations. When I take a flight into the ideal world, it must be a solitary one. People at her age are generally too much engrossed with views and schemes, for that new scene which seems to open wide and boundless before them in the world, to settle their giddy minds to that calm and rational enjoyment which time and experience teach us to value. She is always present and at home, hopeless of admiration. I was not bewildered in the usual way ; but, though loving as I did an occasional excursion beyond this cloudy region, I think I too could always claim the merit of sitting very quiet in the chimney corner. Indeed I find, that tranquillity of temper is very useful in the lot which Providence has appointed for me. This is not the region of select society, yet by no means lonely. One meets with people willing to please, not deficient in point of understanding, and having manners superior to expectation, when you consider every thing. I should, perhaps, enjoy their society more, if what I have at home were less pleasing. No one can be more sensible than I am of what I possess in this respect. Yet there is no perfection. Affection, delicacy, and discernment, may have their excesses. As there is no pure

happiness in this region of shadows, mine is not without alloys and interruptions ; not merely such as are common to every one, but some peculiarly my own. - - - - - And yet my advantages are such, that I should be wretched without them ; and my drawback, such as I can bear without repining, and trust, in time, to conquer without any mighty effort. Alas ! how sadly does my reluctant heart assent to your too just observation ! This is, indeed, the time our children will afford us most pleasure. Should wealth and honour be scattered in their paths, should their merit attain applause and distinction from surrounding multitudes, still they will be weaned from our arms, never more to dwell in them with pleasure, and depend on us for happiness ; never more will they read their hopes and fears, their rewards and punishments, in our eyes. Oh happy obscurity ! that hides the future from us. Happy they, who are not appointed to drain the dregs of life, to outlive those they love, or, what is ten times worse, to see them become unworthy of their love !

“ Spare my eyes, my heart the last. ”

Adieu.

LETTER LVII.

TO MRS. BROWN.

Laggan, March 9, 1789.

* * * * *

AS low as you rate your critical abilities, they have altogether captivated and dazzled my good man. He desires me to keep the letter for my girls, to moderate the poignant affliction they will feel, some time hence, in weeping over Werter. He considers this pathetick hero as a weak though amiable enthusiast, and looks upon Charlotte as first cousin to a coquette. Albert is his hero. With him he sympathizes, and for him he feels, more than for the lover of Nature and of Charlotte. I execrate the plan, detest the example, reprobate the reasoning, shudder at the catastrophe, and am most perniciously charmed with that vivid colouring, that fervid glow of sentiment, that energy of thought, and that simple unadorned pathos, which, without a pomp of sounds, penetrates and melts the very soul. In all his afflictions, I was afflicted. Yes, with all his agonizing horror, I saw the dreadful brink, saw the last pang of dissolution, "like a flash of lightning, illumine the dark gulf of futurity;" but it was lost in a moment in impenetrable obscurity; nothing remained but the lime trees, beneath whose shade he wished to rest, and the silent grave, where

“Pity trembles while it weeps.”

Do not laugh at me for catching a spark of Werter's enthusiasm, amidst so many cares and children. Judge from thence its fatal effects, at an earlier period of life, on

“A heart opprest with love and grief:”

Its destructive tendency, in representing people worthy, amiable, and enlightened, cherishing destructive errors, shutting their eyes to visible consequences, and inflicting misery on others as well as themselves, by the indulgence of feelings, ambiguous even in their dawn. Without one exertion of fortitude to conquer them, without any generous regard for the peace of others, without indeed that disinterested attention to the future peace of the person beloved, which true affection should produce in a pure and elevated mind, these selfish lovers go to the precipice of destruction with the gross and vulgar subterfuge, that while the person is inviolate, no rights are invaded. I have some compassion for Werter, but very little indeed for Charlotte. In all points of delicacy, a woman of a mind at once cultivated and untainted, is a natural judge. Such a mind repels the idea of a divided affection, of giving to the fond and faithful lover, possessed of her earliest affections, what fond and faithful love will spurn at with disdain, chill esteem, and half-hidden sentiments. Yet, this is the person we are taught to admire, and to consider as having a slight blemish lost in a blaze of excellence, and

atoned for by unavailing remorse. Yet, after treating these hazardous Platonicks with due severity, I will tell you in a whisper, what I think the better tendencies of this novel: It depicts nature truly, very truly indeed; for, when I read the short letter, expressing his rapture at the discovery of his favourite fountain, where he says, "Fairies and genii seem to hover over it," &c. I felt my early days renewed; having on such occasions, in the morning of life, felt the very same sensations, and gone about restless with the desire of meeting some one who could derive as much joy from as simple causes. I am sure I have loved particular spots as well as some people are capable of loving those dearest to them. There is no wonderful adventure, no splendid scenes shewn to dazzle and mislead the imagination; no sudden accession of wealth to make those happy, to whom heaven has allotted happiness, with which wealth has no connexion. Sentiment may have slain its thousands; but has not vanity slain its ten thousands? The great danger of novel reading, is a restless desire to be seen and admired, kindled by the surprising adventures of the heroines, the wonderful events which the admiration excited by their beauty produces, and the splendid destiny which generally awaits them. It is this that makes young people so impatient of peace and retirement, so sick of the plain realities of common life. In Werter, there is no exaggerated description, no unnatural or inflated language, no

gilding or glitter. You feel always at home, and find yourself among such people as you daily meet ! and it is this truth of painting that communicates the strong interest we feel in the persons, while our judgment is in arms against their conduct. It is the manchineel tree, whose apples attract us as much by their resemblance to the fruits of the same form, as by their superior beauty. We go with the ease of familiarity to repose under it, though its shadow is danger, and its fruit destruction. I have said so much of Werter, that I shall refer all I would say of myself to another letter. Judge how our imaginations have been impressed, when I tell you, Werter has enlarged our phraseology. Last October, the Spey very often inundated the valley we inhabit ; the various weather that caused this overflow, occasioned many of those nights in which the moon bursts out, and vanishes by turns in total gloom. This partial light makes our mountain scenery appear very awful, and the tremulous effulgence on the wide expanse of troubled waters heightens the effect. These we familiarly called *Wetter* nights. You cannot but remember the horrors of his nocturnal rambles, while meditating the perpetration of "a deed without a name." Rejoice that my critical quiver is emptied, and believe me your unchanged and unchangeable friend.

LETTER LVIII.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

May 16, 1789.

“PITY me, O my friend ! for the hand of God hath touched me ;” touched me to the very quick, and that in a manner so utterly unexpected, I feel still like a person stunned by a thunder-bolt, beginning to pant for breath, and look about to see what I have left, and to feel for what I have lost. I know I need not have recourse to declamation to interest your tenderest sympathy. You know that the dear creature, it has pleased the Almighty to deprive me of, was my pride and my delight. The spirit and animation of that fine countenance no one ever beheld without being struck with its marked expression ; and that fair promise of every human excellence which dawned through every word and action, his fond parents viewed with secret exultation ! Ask Charlotte if I exaggerate, or if ever she saw such manliness, generosity, and tenderness, appear in a child. There was nothing he dreaded like giving me a moment’s pain. O ! what have we lost ? But what has he escaped by this early removal ! Ripening, as he was, for immortality, he lived more in these four short years than most children do in ten. He walked, spoke, thought, and felt sooner than any child I ever saw or heard of.

“ Why wanders wretched thought about his tomb,
In infidel distress ?”—

I know the vanity of these fond, foolish recollections. I know how well it becomes a christian to render his own gifts meekly to the Divine Giver, when demanded. This, and a great deal more, is often and easily said. Nay, I could say it all myself, but nature will have her way. When Mary II. of England was on her death-bed, early finishing a pious and exemplary life with a suitable conclusion, she, having been asked if any of the various remedies she took did her good, answered, that nothing did her good but prayer. I may say something like this ; but, alas ! my efforts to seek this relief are, like my dear child, cold, dead, inanimate !—the heart speaks not, moves not, under the oppressive weight. Here is great room for censure. Be it so. It is not your approbation, but your sympathy that I solicit. When I wrote last I dreaded the measles ; John took them, but very favourably ; we had not the least apprehension for this darling. - - - - -

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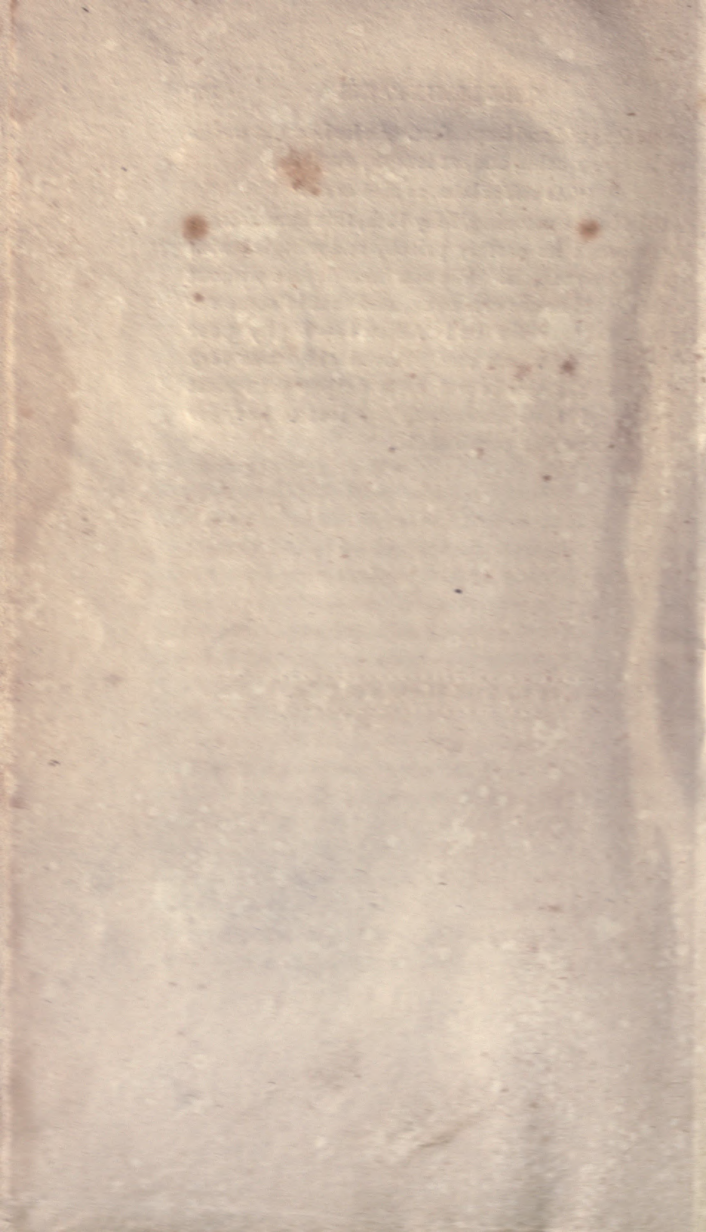
Excuse my dwelling on minutiae so dear to my remembrance. Yet how shall I speak of the three following days ? or, how procure some oblivious draught, to wash them for ever from my remembrance ? The unspeakable pains he then endured still press upon my heart. Yet he was sensible to the last minute, expressed pity and tenderness for us by words, and then by signs, when his speech

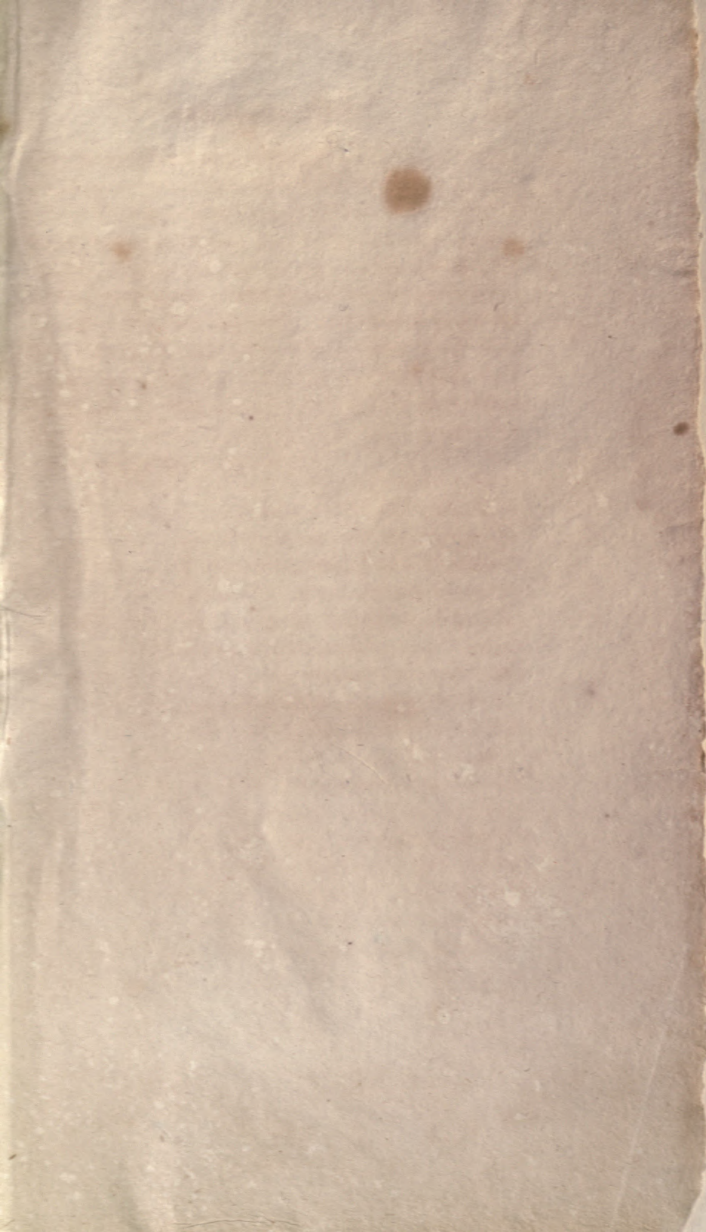
grew languid and imperfect. As he became weaker he grew calm, and, at length, expired,

“As soft as balm, as mild as air.”

At six in the morning, May 12th, this human wonder forsook its earthly prison, and mingled with its kindred angels. We saw him depart without a tear. Now we can weep, and that is some relief. O pray for us! Adieu!—I pity poor Charlotte, to whom our beloved child was very dear, and she thinks and feels deeper than most people. I have announced *her* loss to her, for such I know she considers it.

.....
END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.
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Grant, Anne

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Letters from the mountains

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1809

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