

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



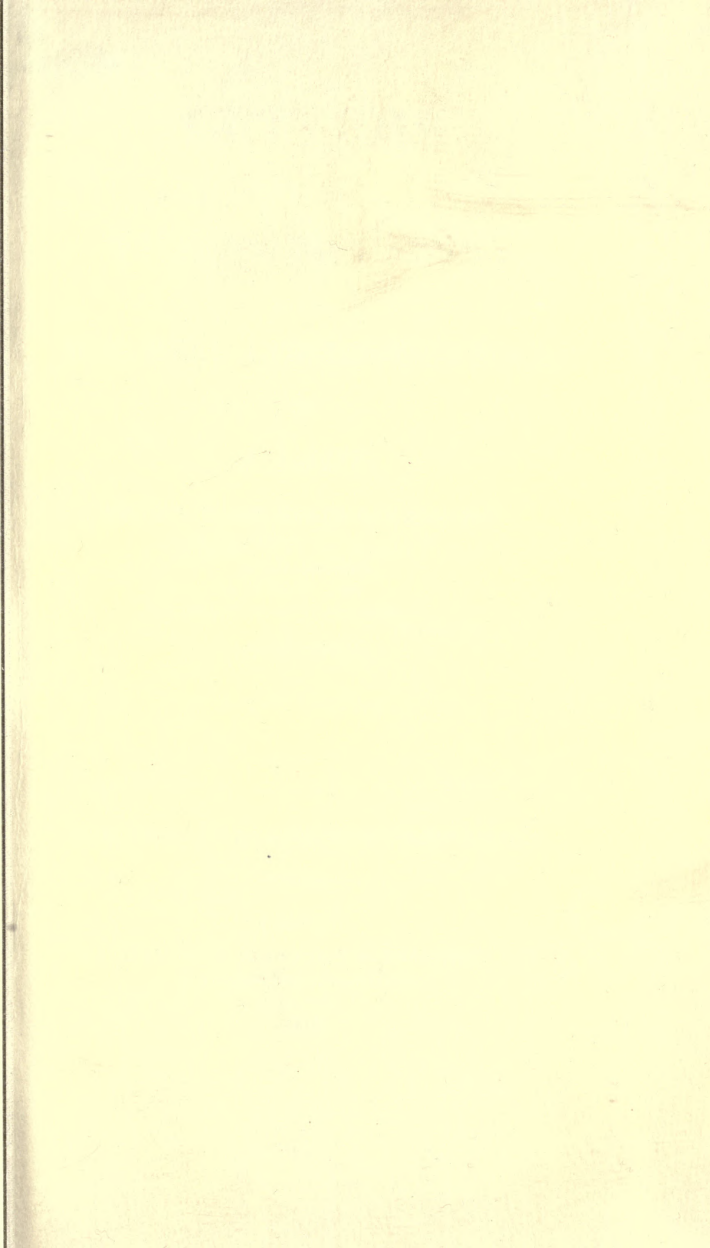
3 1761 01788619 3

HANDBOUND
AT THE



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO PRESS







2614

25

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.

.....
VOL. II.
.....

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

BOSTON :

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

.....
1809.

153347
24/11/19

DA
880
H6G6
1809
V.2

LETTERS

FROM

THE MOUNTAINS.

LETTER LIX.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, May 26, 1789.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

WERE you as happy as your great worldly prosperity, the esteem of all that know you truly, can make you, you would be very unfit to enter into the present feelings of my heart ; these acute returns of pain, these agonizing recollections, that darken the summer's sun, and throw a veil of universal sadness over the fair face of nature ;—the recital of such sensations would form poor entertainment for a person engrossed or elated by the pleasures and gaities of this world.— Since writing the above, I went to Fort George, by *particular desire* ; but, alas ! I found, to my sorrow, that “ change of place is only change of pain.” The regiment in which my father served during the years of my childhood, and to which he is still much attached, he imagined would in-

terest me ; but whether it be that the habit of a retired life has made me think differently from what I used to do, or that my mind is entirely engrossed with one sad and tender idea, I see them not as old friends, but merely as worldlings fluttering after trifles. I am now at home, after spending a dreary month at the Fort, without being awake to any thing but poor C. We thought she would be the better for change of air and salt water. Her rapid growth enervates her. We have brought your relation home with us. - - - - Charlotte will be home this week. I am relieved at the thought of it. To her I dare talk fully of what is ever in my thoughts. With her I can venture to feed my insatiable sorrow with every little anecdote and recollection that will serve to keep his dear memory alive. His father, though he cannot get over it himself, blames me very justly for repining at my darling's happiness. I will not be surprised or angry, though you should reprove me for this extravagance ; but I am not well ; and returning here, I find my beloved child's image in every place, in some of those lively and striking attitudes which were almost peculiar to himself. I cannot go to the door without seeing the spot where the cold earth covers that lovely countenance, which I never could behold without an emotion of pleasure, only exceeded by my present anguish. Happily I have preserved his dear profile, taken when he was out of humour. His sensible frown adds strength to

the expression of the most animated countenance I ever beheld. I do not acknowledge your kindness to Charlotte. I do not answer a sentence of your most affectionate letter, which I thankfully received a month ago. I can speak of nothing but the only thing I think of. Do not think I neglect the only method of procuring true consolation. I earnestly implore strength to bear my sorrows ; but I am not able to pray, or wish, in any degree, to enable me to forget the object of them—his remembrance is so sweet to my soul, and my aspirations after a re-union with him, where we shall part no more, are so consequently strong. Pray read Dr. Gregory's Comparative View, &c. and observe particularly the last section on the influence of religion ; that on taste ; and the strictures on false refinement. I long to have you share the entertainment they afforded to my happier hours. A letter from you is almost the only thing I could read now. Write amply ; give me good accounts of Mr. B—; and believe you are one of the few that still interest me. Farewell !

LETTER LX.

TO MRS. SMITH.

Laggan, August 3, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WEEK after week has elapsed without my gratifying myself by writing to you, or being able to assign a good reason. I shall assign the true one ; which, at the same time, I own I cannot justify. When I received your letter, in which you animadvert, very justly, on the folly, not to say guilt, of wasting that time and thought in fruitless mourning for the dead, which ought to be employed in useful attention to those who are left, I was ashamed to discover the state of my mind even to you ; and from you how could I conceal it ? Truth is, my mind has been either wound up to a pitch, at which it could not long remain, or sunk in the deepest dejection. -----

* * * * *

But in vain do I weary and exhaust my worn-out spirits in pursuit of a vision that eludes my grasp. Alas ! I must turn my eyes to objects more attainable, and more suited to my situation, and the ties that still hold me to this world. I must again run the round of earthly cares and low pursuits, and wait patiently till my appointed day come. For I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. A late alarm, from another part of my family, con-

vinced me forcibly of my own weakness and inconsistency. The grief which I could neither soothe or reason down, grew more tolerable on being divided. A bright atmosphere, a busy scene, and the affectionate attention of a pleasing and easy companion, did more to relieve my mind than all that reason or reflection could suggest. I always think of him, but with more composure. I view him as having passed the fiery trial of suffering, and as regarding us with tender compassion. The first thing that alleviated my distress was Charlotte's return, in itself pleasing, but still more gratifying, as her minute details about you all, made you in a manner visible and present to us. This suspended the sense of pain, by renewing the pleasing remembrance of the innocent happy hours we formerly passed together. My youngest boy had got a hurt, the consequences of which alarmed us, but he is now better. Our busy season coming on, and finding myself incapable of any steady application within doors, I sent his maid to the hay-making, and wandered out a good deal with him in my arms. In consequence of this exertion, I have found exercise in the open air operates beyond any thing towards the relief of depression of spirits. Long may it be before you require any such remedy for that heaviest of evils ! I have been indeed very little within, till of late that the bad weather has confined me.

I have thought much of what you say of a certain friend of mine being in danger of running into

the extreme of enthusiasm ; but, after all, cannot think the hazard very serious, though I have *paused* and *pondered* sufficiently on the subject. The fact is, that it is in vain for us to flatter ourselves, that the great work of our salvation is a bye concern, for which we may occasionally set aside a few minutes, which, by chance, are left vacant from business or pleasures. This does not agree with the opinion which the wise and good in all ages, and of all persuasions, seem to have entertained (however different their degrees of light and intelligence) viz. that our manner of existing here is not the final end of our being ; that this is merely a state of probation, in which there is a glimmering of light afforded us, barely sufficient to distinguish good and evil ; and a degree of choice and judgment, just enough to enable us to make a selection, and hold by the best. Were our intellect strong enough to discern the lucid order, and according harmony of the divine scheme of Providence in its full extent ; could the horrors of guilt, and its consequent punishment, be made visible through the thick veil of humanity, or could weak mortal eyes bear the refulgence of celestial beauty ; there could be no room for choice or hesitation, no exercise of fortitude, discernment, faith or hope, no struggles betwixt the erring will and the love of rectitude. Creatures left without choice, and impelled by the clear and glaring certainty before them, not struggling up the hill to virtue and felicity, but swimming with

the stream in torpid ease could not exercise those virtues, which our imperfect state so loudly calls for. All the noble exertions, all the softer emotions, of the mind, lose their meaning and their use, where there is no vice to combat, no distress to relieve, no weakness to protect. All this is so like common-place, that you must consider me as digressing very widely. Yet the perpetual struggle and warfare with guilt and sorrow, which is evidently our appointed task and duty here, leaves little room to suppose that any body can be righteous over much. We see our duty imperfectly in this land of shades and apparitions. Thus much, however, we are certain of, that we walk continually on the brink of danger in the open paths of life. If not happier, those are certainly safer, who, in some measure, fly from the conflict. What do people pursue in the world but business or pleasure? The regulation of the mind, and the exertion of that active beneficence which true piety produces, form such an occupation to a mind so turned, as to exercise all its faculties in the most agreeable manner. With those who have made great advances in piety, I should suppose "perfect love casteth out fear;" and that these exercises become a source of pure and lasting pleasure, as incomprehensible to the children of this world, as colours to the blind. Enthusiasm is the wine of life; it cheers and supports the mind; though excess, in either case, produces intoxication and madness. I am not sure that the

religion of the heart can exist without a certain degree of enthusiasm. What noble or tender emotion of the mind is excited in any great degree without producing it? Very few affix a precise or determinate idea to the word, used in a religious sense. You will hear many people, who have never thought about the matter, parrotizing about enthusiasm, when they mean bigotry or fanaticism, if, indeed, they mean any thing. Religion has not so great an enemy upon earth as vanity; and no wonder, since true piety must needs be founded in deep humility. Wealth, power, and distinction cannot be attained by all the vain and ambitious; but the prize of wit and wisdom seems always within reach to those determined to be wise or witty. Those who wish to purchase these distinctions as cheap as possible, exchange the principles they only seemed to possess, for the character of wit and talents they only seemed to acquire. They hear impious wit oftenest quoted by the thoughtless and dissipated, and, therefore, they think impiety necessarily implies wit, and are indeed very often incapable of distinguishing the one from the other. These are the people who so frequently talk with contempt and ridicule of enthusiasm, in the religious sense of that expression, as they *misunderstand* it. I have been very serious, and, as generally turns out in that case, very tedious; but some late instances that I have met with, of absurd pretensions to wit, founded on still more absurd pre-

tensions to infidelity, have really provoked me ; especially, as I very well know this pretender believes and trembles in the dark. For his impiety he must account to his Maker ; but his impertinent ostentation is an offence against society. I suppose you are very glad that I am going to bid you good night. I fancy you will think, after giving you this lecture on impiety, the next thing I shall set about will be to caution bees and ants against idleness, or our friend W. D. against too much gravity and austerity. I don't know whether you will be the better for reading this, but I am much the better for writing it, and that you will think a sufficient apology. Adieu ! my dear ; I have taken the declamation, and left action to you. Be ever what you have been, and I shall be at no loss for an example to illustrate some of my sage precepts.

LETTER LXI.

TO MRS. BROWN, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Aug. 13, 1789.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN !

I AM such an economist of your pence, that I have deferred my sincere and cordial congratulations all this time, in hopes of getting them sent by one who has cheated me at last. Yet this

is the only testimony in my power to give of the unabated friendship I shall always retain for you, and this is simply all ; for, with me, despondency and ill health have been so constantly producing and reproducing each other, for some time past, that I have neither the power nor inclination to furnish you with the least degree of entertainment. Charlotte and I were all last week on a tour of visits on Loch Laggan side, where the romantick singularity of the place, and peculiar turn of its sequestered inhabitants, might, in happier hours, have afforded a subject for amusing description : as it is, I can only say, that the rocks and woods which border this fine piece of water, are equally gloomy and magnificent ; while the spot where we spent most of our allotted days, can be equalled by few in a singular assemblage of rural beauties. The deep silence which surrounds you, in a place secluded even from the Highland world, and distant from every other human dwelling, affords leisure to contemplate the placid features of the scene around the house. This, from a small eminence, surveys a meadowy plain, bordering on the lake, in which large trees have been left here and there, producing a very fine effect to the eye. Through this extended meadow, a stream, delightfully pure, wanders over fine gravel, while you trace its progress by the copses of hazle and alder, vocal with the sweetest strain of woodland melody, and rich in all the smaller wild fruits that abound in this district.

In the immediate scene you are soothed with every thing that is beautiful, and in the surrounding ones, awed by all that is majestick. The lofty *Coryarder*, the haunt of eagles and of clouds, towers behind ; before, the lake spreads its still expanse ; opposite, the dark remains of the most ancient forest in Scotland borders the whole east side of the lake ; above it rises a mountain wooded almost to the top ; and beyond these awful solitudes appear rocks, at whose barren desolation the mind revolts. Of the inhabitants of this recess, I can only say, that they are peaceful and industrious, and seem as mild and harmless as the sheep, who are the sole subjects of this realm of solitude. I should tell you, that the lake contains two small wooded islands, on which are some fragments of buildings of the most remote antiquity. One is called the Isle of Kings ; the other that of Dogs ; for there, it would appear, their Caledonian majesties, who had here a hunting seat, used to confine Bran and Luath, and all their other followers of the chace. It was hay-making time ; we worked at our needles, or wandered at will, all the long sun-shine day, in the haunt of roes. In the evening, we had regularly a party on the water, and musick. You start, but I am correct. When our landlord's sons had worked till tea-time, they came in to rest, and whenever tea was over, they launched out their boat, which two of them rowed to the opposite side of the lake, while the third played, on the vi-

olin, some of our favourite old tunes, that brought you and your musick full on my recollection. But we were not merely regaled with airy sounds; the central gloom of the ancient forest abounds in bilberries, strawberries, &c. &c.; and having others with us to hasten the task of gathering, we left the youths fishing, returned by twilight, and supped on the trout they caught, the fruit we gathered, and richer cream than ever your Lowland eyes beheld. This literally pastoral excursion has set my pen in motion beyond my own expectations; for I have so far lost the knack of writing upon nothing, which you once ascribed to me, that I seem now no longer able to write on any thing.

Were I possessed of descriptive talents, Charlotte's extravagant joy, on the birth of your son, would give full room for their display. As for me, the moral and melancholy turn which my thoughts have lately taken, leads me to associate even the cradle with the grave, its sure, however distant successor.

"Birth's feeble cry, and death's deep dismal groan," are very properly connected by our favourite plaintive bard; whom, by the bye, I am told it is not now the fashion to admire. Dear Jenny, continue to love me, till I learn "the last new fashion of the heart," till I cease to have a taste and feelings of my own, and, to be in some measure guided by them. I wonder when it will be the fashion to regret that the grass is not blue, or the

skies green. Pray bestow the charity of a letter upon me very soon. A little time from you will now be valued like the widow's mite, because you can ill spare it,—I heartily condole with Mrs. —, on the loss of her son, which will wound her pride, as well as her more tender feelings ; for I suppose she was vain of having him. I too, was vain once, but my vanity, I hope, is buried with the cause of it. Charlotte, whose love of infancy is most inordinate, regrets that she is not with you, to assist in nursing your heir. Mr. G. joins me in warm and sincere wishes, that he may be a long continued blessing to you both ; and, with best respects to his father, let me add a caution which painful experience dictates—Love him with moderation, as we ought to do every earthly thing. Make my best wishes to your brothers and their mates, and thank the latter for me, on Charlotte's account.

I am, my dear Mrs. Brown, with much affection,
Yours.

LETTER LXII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, Dec. 23, 1789.

MADAM,

THOUGH I feel a desire of expressing to you, in some degree, the deep sense we all have of the generous part you have acted towards Miss

Grant, I own I am at a loss how to do justice to my own sentiments on that subject, without running the risk of wounding your delicacy, or falling into the beaten track of unmeaning compliment. This I know has, by frequent misapplication, lost its value and significance. Yet I am sure no person, capable of acting as you have done on this occasion, can be at a loss to judge how people must be touched with a kindness of the most essential importance, done them in that instance, where they feel it most tenderly ; and this by a person, whose character (the only thing we know of you) is such, as makes protection and advice doubly valuable, and thoroughly to be depended on. The partial light in which we view this object of our greatest earthly solicitude, endeared to us by innocence, misfortune, and a thorough knowledge of her disposition, led us to hope for the kind offices and good wishes of every well-disposed person. But it required a very liberal and superior mind indeed, to take so clear and just a view of objects so remote and detached. We will not take all the credit of doing, as you seem to think, what no one else would have done. Your present conduct convinces me that, in our place, you would have acted just as we did ; but I am not, by any means, so clear that we, in your place, should have done as you did. Uncommon and disinterested exertions in the cause of virtue, by people who live in the world, are efforts like swimming against the current. Recluses, like

us, walk in the light which emanates from the unbiassed mind, and seek or hope no other approbation than the whispered plaudit of the gratified heart. In this case we have more ; we are doubly rewarded, by the distinguished merit of the object of our cares, and the daily improvements that mark her progress in knowledge and in virtue.

Her reception in the family of her worthy relation, Mr. Douglas*, is a circumstance every way favourable to her. Every motive of prudence and gratitude conspire to make it highly proper for her to sacrifice her own views and inclinations to the slightest indication of their will. The circle of acquaintance she made, when she went to town, though not wide, nor perhaps highly fashionable, was among people of real worth and estimation, to whom she owes much for civility and most useful attention. These it would be most indelicate and ungrateful in her to drop. Yet it will not be proper in her to go any where without their full approbation (I mean the Douglas's.) How to act or apologize in this or any delicate case, I am sure she will be directed by your candid advice.

Mr. G. and Charlotte join in offering our most grateful respects to you and good Mr. Macintosh, &c. &c.

.....

* Mr. John Douglas, of Glasgow, was nearly related to this justly admired young person ; and there a most affectionate intimacy began betwixt her and his daughter, now Mrs. Douglas, of Douglas Park.

LETTER LXIII.

TO MRS. BROWN.

Laggan, Feb. 13, 1790,

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN !

I HAVE deferred writing to you this long time, waiting the return of as much strength and spirits as should enable me to do it with some degree of fulness and precision. Though somewhat better, I am far from well, and have been this week past crowded with people coming to take leave of the young travellers, who go to-morrow. In the first place, my mind is perfectly at ease with regard to the deposit I am about to place in your hands; so much so, that I shall never think of giving you directions about it, convinced that, at this time of life, and in this stage of education, your judgment is far more to be depended on than my own. The arduous task of forming her heart, and instilling into her mind principles of moral rectitude and devout submission to the source of all goodness, is, I hope, in some degree performed. She is docile, and willing to please, without the least tincture of levity on the one hand, or self-conceit and stubbornness on the other. You will find her disposed to pay you implicit obedience, on the best of principles, that of an interior conviction, that you will only order what is right. It only remains for me to hint at the defects I ob-

served, yet durst not blame, in her past education, in which I have had little share.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Experience has taught me the evil of this. Kept constantly to my needle (of which application many trophies remain) I was childishly ignorant of every thing else when I got the charge of a family.

* * * * *

But I have employed her in this manner all winter, and find her so ashamed of deficiency, and willing to please and be useful, that I hope she will conquer all indolent habits. While absent from us, she was shut up with old people, without a companion, or any relaxation but what books afforded ; in these she took refuge, and in these found consolation : but they were taken without choice or selection. She has, from a kind of necessity, read more, and perhaps reflected and digested more, than any Miss of her age you know. There is a certain thoughtful indolence, a degree of over-refinement, and an indifference towards ordinary characters, and common, though very useful things, to be feared, as the result of much knowledge early acquired. This is more especially to be feared in a mind that unites a degree of masculine solidity and habits of reflection, with the quickness and sensibility common to the sex ; and such are generally those female minds that range beyond the usual limits in search of knowledge and entertainment. However, we need not

much fear ; when our pupil enters her teens, and acquires the love of dress, and thirst for amusement natural to that period, all this may scatter like morning mists. I do not however, wish her to read much at this time ; and what she does read, I wish to be of a moral and serious cast. Let her write, dance, and attend a geographical class, with Mr. S—'s children. Drawing and musick are both out of the question : she has neither ear for the one, nor that turn of fancy which leads to excellence in the other. Tinkling and daubing are tolerable amusements for the superabundant leisure of the wealthy, who have the means, as far as possible, to make art supply the defects of nature ; but I would not waste time and money in swimming against the stream, were it but to prevent the painful hypocrisy of those who are forced, from mere compassion, to “ d—n with faint praise ” miserable musick, and wretched drawing. I despise the fashionable frippery of fillagree, which neither displays taste, nor forms habits of attention and diligence. Needle-work, good old court needle-work, is the thing. It exercises fancy, fixes attention, and, by perseverance and excellence in it, habituates the mind to patient application, and to those peaceful and still-life pleasures, which form the chief enjoyment of every truly amiable woman. *Ton* is an epidemical frenzy, that follows and overtakes us every where, though we in following it can overtake it no where. Would you believe it is partly to shun

this, that I was impatient to send your *protogée* from her former abode, which is become gay and fashionable, in as great excess as this is retired and rusticated.

* * * * *

To remove her by such a quick transition from absolute retirement to the *beau monde*, would be destructive to all my views, whose object it is to bring up my children in the utmost frugality, simplicity, and industry; and at the same time give them that culture of mind, and inspire them with that propriety and elegance of sentiment, which will dignify a blameless and virtuous obscurity, if that should be their lot, and form their manners to such softness and decorum as would not disgrace a more easy situation, if Providence were pleased to bestow it upon them. You ask, how people secluded from the world are to acquire manner. I answer, that where there is mind, there is always manner; and when they are accustomed to treat each other with gentleness and courtesy, they will feel that quick disgust at what is rude and inelegant, which contributes more than any instruction to the refinement of manners. I am sure this homily has worn out your patience. I regret exceedingly that your sister is out of town, because I could wish M— to be with her every moment she should be absent from you, except a few formal visits, which she may make to some of my old acquaintance. Children at her age can hardly be considered as making any

part of the company, being rather an incumbrance. They however amuse themselves, and enlarge their circle of ideas by being present in mixed companies ; but in general I think they are more improved by being with those they know best and can be easy with, because they are more interested, and attend more to their conversation. I am but too sensible of the task I impose, and the trouble I occasion you : but you know not how desirous I am to have her in a private family. More I will not say ; for it avails not to tease you with apologies. - - - - - With true esteem and unbounded confidence,

I am yours most sincerely.

LETTER LXIV.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, February 5, 1791.

MY EVER DEAR FRIEND,

I own it ; our correspondence did, for a while, languish on my side. But what has not this interruption cost me ! and how various and painful were the causes of it ! I have written, and enquired again and again, without success.* I shall, however, make this last effort to discover

.....

* Miss Ourry was at this time in Ireland.

whether my dearest Anne is still a fellow-traveller through this vale of shadows ; or, whether I am to consider her as one of those separated spirits, whom tremulous hope and fond imagination flatter us with recognizing, at some future period, in holier, happier regions ; for I will not, cannot suppose you capable of neglecting, slighting, or even forgetting me.

Had my last letter reached you, I am certain you would have answered it. Even my unavailing friendship was worth gratitude ; because it was very warm and very true, and pure from every selfish motive, except the vanity of being esteemed by a person of superior merit, which was certainly very pardonable. However, as you are a human creature, and, as such, liable to change, I shall admit the bare possibility of your having received and neglected my letter ; and shall, therefore, suspend giving any account of my concerns till I have it under your hand, that you are desirous to hear of them.

I will not regale you with an account of the fine children, which it has pleased God to bestow on me ; of the still finer ones whom he has thought fit to resume to himself : or of the tranquillity and comparative happiness I have enjoyed since I saw you ; no, nor of the health and prosperity of my parents, or the great and wonderful vicissitudes that have happened in the circle of our acquaintance. I must not only be desired, but intreated, before I make any of these communications. I

will tell you, however, that nothing shall ever abate that tender regard, which I shall carry to my grave for you. Mr. G. who is your great admirer, longs also to hear of you. Don't mind postage ; mind only what you owe on the score of friendship to your unaltered.

LETTER LXV.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, March 27, 1791.

MY DEAREST NANCY,

THE sight of your well-known dear-loved hand filled my heart with a pleasure to which I knew nothing comparable, unless what the woman of Zarepta might have felt, on receiving her lamented son alive from the hands of the prophet. Alas ! I have a sad reason for too deeply feeling the force of that allusion ; but I will not cloud our first meeting with a detail of sorrows ; as little will I take up your time with a tedious recital of the ways and means I have used to hear of you.

----- I had not Mr. M.'s* address, but endeavoured to point him out by the circumstances of his being F. R. S. and having held a
.....

* Malliet, the father of Miss Ourry's friend, Miss Malliet, who then held an office about the Palace, and lived in Westminster.

place at court. By your having formerly taught me to address you under Lord Kinsale's cover, I was led to discover you in the manner which has proved so gratifying to us both. May my benedictions rest and remain with this good Lord. I wish it were as honourable to him, as the privilege of wearing his hat where he pleases. Why should I tell you why I was so much concerned and afflicted at the melancholy detail of what you have lost, and what you have suffered? I can but too easily conceive what you must have felt at the final parting with your worthy parents. You all lived so much, and so entirely with each other, and loved each other so *exclusively* as well as tenderly. You can better judge why Young was so great a favourite with me, now that you know, by sad experience,

“ There is no pang like that of bosom torn
From bosom, bleeding o'er the sacred dead.”

The depredations which fraud and villany have made on your little store, I sincerely regret. Yet, when I consider that your mind was always superior to trappings and tinsel, and that sorrow and sickness must have long since dissolved the charm that attaches us to the mere exterior forms of life; when I consider too that you appear to have gathered - - - from the wreck of your father's property, and that you are now cherished in the tender bosom of friendship and true sympathy; I would fain hope, your pecuniary resources are equal to your wants, though not to your spirits and past ex-

pectations. At worst, you can purchase an annuity - - - - - I must go lightly over past transactions. My next will be under cover to —* who is a Cornish member, and, having contrived, like Orpheus, by the power of his lyre, to build a house in this country, is our neighbour and acquaintance. I hope the musical manes of the said Orpheus will forgive my blunder, in imputing to him what was done by Amphion, who, on better recollection, built the Theban walls; and, though I know you dearly love a little hit at me, I hope you will have so much respect for my classical recollections, as to resist the temptation of comparing me to one of those savages who danced to the said plastick strains: I lie the more open to this, from my singular delight in long descended song. - - - - - I am resolved, like Dogberry, to bestow all my tediousness upon you. Receive, mean time, an abridged, but faithful description of the present state of my family and affairs.

We live on the banks of the Spey; (would for your sake, it were the Tweed) Mr. G. possesses, one way or other, an income of - - - - - We occupy a comfortable cottage, consisting of four rooms, light closets, and a nursery, and kitchen built out by way of addition. It is situated in a south aspect, at the foot of an arable hill, behind which stretches an extensive moss, once a forest,

.....
 * James Macpherson, the translator of Ossian; who was our neighbour in the country, and used to frank covers for us.

and still abounding in fuel, which is surmounted by a lofty mountain, the top of which is often lost in the clouds, while its bosom, hollow and verdant, is a reservoir of copious springs, and abounds in early pasturage, and berries peculiar to these regions. Our little domain, to which the churchlands are added, stretches about a quarter of a mile through a meadowy, I might well add, flowery valley; through which the river turns and returns again like the Links of Forth, which its waters far excel in purity. At the end of the house is a brook, which often reminds me of Franky's purling brooks, for it purls abundantly through summer, babbles in harvest, and brawls, like a termagant, all winter. In the meadows below, it assumes a new character, and winds, in a deep channel through richly decorated banks, with a murmur so dulcet, so softly plaintive, that one is almost tempted to ask what ails it. I should have told you, that at one end of our cottage is a garden, in which we have planted a variety of trees, and where small fruit abounds. At our door is a stone porch with seats; this rural portico is so covered with honeysuckle, that you would take it for a bower; we have a little green court enclosed before, which, in fine weather, forms a supplement to the nursery. I should have begun by telling you, that we hold a farm at a very easy rent, which supports a dozen milk cows, and a couple of hundred sheep, with a range of summer pasture on the mountains for our young stock,

horses, &c. This farm supplies us with every thing *absolutely* necessary ; even the wool and flax, which our handmaids manufacture to clothe the children, are our own growth. But it is time to introduce you within doors, where you will find the master of the dwelling in the midst of the circle he most delights in, and in that home where he appears to most advantage ; because his hospitality and warmth of heart here shine through that cloud of reserve and diffidence which conceals him every where else. Singularly domestick, a fond husband, and tenderly indulgent father, he delights in his children from their birth, without nursing them like an old woman ; judicious and attentive in what regards out-door management, but totally unconcerned as to what passes within, considering, like a true Highlander, household affairs as entirely the female province ; and the duties of his sacred function as the only object, beyond his family, deserving of serious regard. Next, his mate, very little altered in sentiment and principle since you saw her, yet having the wings of romantick elevation somewhat clipt by increasing years and cares ; and the fervour of enthusiasm a little abated, with that matronly cast of manners, which the constant exercise of authority, mingled with affection, naturally produces.

You will not think my taste improved when I tell you, 'tis, if possible, more primitive than ever ; and that all my pastoral, popular, and American prejudices, have “grown with my growth,

and strengthened with my strength." How will all this agree with your "prejudice against prejudices?" But we shall agree in the long run, as we ever did. Our minds, indeed, must have had a strong predisposition to unite, when they surmounted so many differences in, what with common minds is every thing, early habits and education. My children I shall characterize at more leisure. At present I shall only say, the first is said to be like her mother, the second like her father, and the third like—a ewe lamb. Now, to form a more precise idea, you must consider these resemblances, as not only literal, but characteristick of my sons. C— and Petrina are twins, a perfect contrast, one being dark-haired, quick and lively, the other fair, soft, and delicate. - - - - - Here is the family-piece drawn, and the landscape; I have not yet shaded my drawing, but I shall throw in the shades in my next. I had more sons—but, Heaven has resumed its own, and I ought silently to bow to its decrees. Expect in my next the eventful history of our friends at Fort Augustus, most of whom have already set out before us, to explore the wide ocean of eternity. Briefly, adieu!

LETTERS FROM

LETTER LXVI.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, June 4, 1791.

MY dear friend ! what a history would it make, were I to relate all the little family occurrences, which, in rapid succession, have hurried on the time since I wrote my last. I carried down my second daughter, who had a threatening illness, to my father's, for sea air. You can't think how the good old people rejoiced to hear that I had found you again :—their lively feelings on this occasion delighted me. I love to see the evening of life warmed by the gentle flame of kindly affections. Of all the evils that wait on the decline of life, there is none I shrink from so much as that chilling torpor of the soul, which contributes more than all our infirmities to make old age unlovely. When I came in a little open machine we keep for these journies, I returned home through the country where Mr. G.'s relations live, and went through a hasty course of visitation. He came down some miles to meet me, and presented your letter, which I snatched with avidity, and read over with delight. I shall defer the mentioning of its contents, till I go through my promised narrative. For some years after you went away, my letters furnished you with an unbroken series, of which take this succinct and pithy sequel.

* * * * *

I had been all this while projecting a visit to Glasgow, but had deferred it from time to time, out of sympathy for Mrs. Newmarch, who hoped for her lord's return, and would feel most forlorn without me ; but the marriage in the family, and the crowd of company which succeeded, leaving her no room to complain of solitude, I went southwards, where my visit, only meant for a month, was drawn out to near a year, which was most agreeably spent. I look back upon it, indeed, as one of the most pleasing periods of my life ; not being passed in a perpetual flutter of idle visits, but in confirming and strengthening the friendships of my earlier years, and making new and valuable additions to them, which have been ever since a source of great comforts and pleasure to me. Leaving the excellent family, with whom I spent this year of felicity, I returned home through Perth, where I had the high gratification of meeting some of my distant relations, who were people of distinguished merit, and whose taste and manners were so suited to my own, that my heart adopted them to a nearer connexion than those distant ties can form. Those lovely sisters,* who lived in this world with all their views directed to another, and meekly sheltered in the shade of retirement, qualities entitled to universal esteem

.....

* Mrs. Young, of Perth ; and Mrs. Bannar, married to the minister of Cramond.

and admiration, lived only long enough to prove that they could fulfil every duty, and grace every department of life. In the bloom of youth, tenderly beloved by the worthiest of husbands, blest with every thing their regulated and modest wishes could aspire to, they obeyed the irresistible summons. The youngest, who was the most beautiful, departed in her twenty-second year, in the high triumphs of faith, taking not only a serene but joyful leave of friends, whom she loved with unusual tenderness. Her sister, in whose arms she died, was immediately seized with the same disorder, and met death with the same well-grounded heroism.

“ Surely to blissful realms those souls are flown,
That never flatter’d, censur’d, envied, strove.”

My dear, you will excuse this digressive tribute to departed excellence. What havock has been lately made in the little circle of those I loved !—

“ Yes, even here, amidst these secret shades,
The simple scenes of unprov’d delight,
Affliction’s iron hand my breast invades,
And death’s dread dart is ever in my sight.”

Indeed my meditations hover so constantly about the confines of the world unknown, where my aching eyes are continually exploring the departing footsteps of those who still live in my remembrance, that I now see this world and all its vanities, as the apostle says we do futurity, “ through a glass darkly.” These frequent excursions of the mind into the trackless ocean of vast eternity, con-

tribute not a little to throw a dim shade over every thing that dazzles and attracts, in this valley of vision. Unwillingly must I return to my Fort Augustus narrative, though no motive less potent than a desire to gratify you, would induce me to retrace such a series of crime, folly, and misfortune. Hear then, and be, if not amused, at least instructed. -----

We three all fled at once our several ways, and left the demons of discord and deceit to rule their votaries ; none of us would have liked to have outstaid the other. My year's residence in Clydesdale had revived and cherished the love of peace, virtue, and decorum in my heart. The disorders of that most beautiful, but most unhappy place, Fort Augustus, had shewn me vice and folly in their ugliest aspect. Judge, then, whether, in the midst of tranquillity, mutual affection, domestick harmony, and the esteem and good will of a decent neighbourhood, I did not enjoy my situation, without repining after languid idleness, insipid chit-chat, artificial wants, poor attempts at finery, and all the mortifications which result from the feeble efforts of inferior people to grasp that fleeting phantom *ton*. I am a wretched narrator, and miserable chronologer ; I write fluently from my heart, but very lamely from my memory. Two marriages, however, not of the number said to be made in heaven, I will detail ; and let Desdemona heedfully attend, for 'tis no small plague to me to rake up my recollections.

* * * * *

My father removed to Fort George some years ago, where he lives very happily, and derives much pleasure from his grand-children. Different friends from Glasgow and Edinburgh have visited us in this retreat. By the death of my third son, a charming infant, who lived not many days, I was convinced of what I could not have easily believed, that the death of such an infant could produce severe feelings of sorrow for the time ; a thing both sinful and unaccountable. I had, however, another son remaining, in whom all my delight was centered, and who was, indeed, every way an extraordinary child, spoke, walked, and shewed tokens of sensibility and understanding long before the usual period. Strong, robust, and manly, we looked on him as the future pillar of our family, and never dreaded that stroke which we bore so ill when it came. In the fatal May of 1789 our children were seized with the measles, and had it favourably, all but the darling and pride of our hearts ; who being seized at the same time with a worm-fever, which we were not aware of, and knew not how to manage, made his escape from the troubles of life, and left us overwhelmed with the most sinful and extravagant sorrow. But you are no novice in distress, and I will not awaken your griefs, by opening afresh the wounds of mine. My constitution, enfeebled by the rapid increase of my family, was greatly impaired by this shock, but I have had better

health since the birth of my twins, who, I hope will continue to be the youngest. My spirits are pretty equal, though that sad event has added to my habits of musing.

The soil here is very rich, though the climate is cold and gloomy. I am very fond of the lower class of people ; they have sentiment, serious habits, and a kind of natural courtesy ; in short, they are not mob, an animal which Smollet most emphatically says he detests in its head, midriff, and members ; and, in this point, I do not greatly differ with him. You would wonder how many of the genteeler class live here. They are not rich to be sure ; so much the better for us ;

“Where no contiguous palace rears its head,
To shame the meanness of the humble shed,”

people do very well, and keep each other in countenance. They have been mostly in the army, are socially and kindly disposed, and have more both of spirit and good-breeding than is usually met with in people of their pitch ; and, as for an inclination to gaiety and hospitality, you may judge of them by what you have seen among your quondam neighbours. If they have foibles, why should I expatiate on them ? They have treated us with uniform kindness and civility, and shewn us as much friendship as, in their idea, becomes them, to such as are not kindred, the sole measure of affection here. I shall quit the ungrateful topick of censure with observing, that, after all, they have more dignity in their pride, and less absurd-

ity in their vanity, than your Hibernian friends, for whom too I still retain a sneaking kindness, after all : but indeed I saw an excellent sample of them.

I have made a great acquisition of late ; a fine young creature, a relation of Mr. G.'s. who is under his protection, and passes the winter with her friends in town, and the rest of the year here.* At more leisure I will tell you her story, but am now as sick of narrative as I have made you. Mr. G. has been at Edinburgh, attending the General Assembly, which answers to your poor dead, or rather dumb Convocation. I meet him next week at Lord Breadalbane's seat, where he is to come with some of my Glasgow friends.

When I hear from you again I shall acquaint you with the result, and give my ideas coolly and distinctly on the subject of your letter, and your present mode of living. I can now only congratulate you on enjoying the society of your Louisa, to whose superior mind yours must be a higher gratification than any that wealth can procure. What indeed can wealth procure that the vulgar-est wretch may not equally taste and enjoy, except that first of intellectual joys, which wealth so rarely attains, the society of an elegant mind, purified by virtue, and endeared by friendship. I long to hear of your crossing the mountains on a goat, and how Wales agrees with you. I shall

.....

* Miss Charlotte Grant, since Mrs. Smith.

mark the geographical bearing of my dwelling minutely in my next. We live about fifty miles from both Inverness and Perth, which are the nearest towns; yet, in spite of distance and obscurity, my sworn foe, the *ton*, pursues, overtakes, and surrounds me. Don't wait for a frank; one who despises all other luxuries as I do, may well claim this single indulgence. Adieu! beloved.

I am yours unalterably.

LETTER LXVII.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, Sept. 3, 1791.

NEVER did a cordial come more opportunely to a poor creature fainting with weakness, than my dearest A.'s kind letter, to soothe my agonizing heart, and divert, for a little, my attention from one sad object, which fixes and engrosses it, in spite of my prayers and endeavours. Petrina, my lovely Petrina, the sweet image of my dear lamented Peter, is no more. This is a wound very near the heart, and yet I must own the justice of it. I had a darling before, on whose animated and sensible countenance I gazed with unbounded rapture, and whom I always regarded with unwarrantable partiality. Yet I might well have judged, from his dissimilarity to ourselves,

and the rest of the family, that he would not remain with us. After having dazzled and charmed us for four years and a few months, he returned to Him from whom he came, leaving us overwhelmed with excessive and sinful anguish. About a year after his death, those twins were born. The eldest I instantly recognized to be the exact resemblance of my sweet boy, whose memory is twisted with the fibres of my heart. As she grew older, her vivacity, her open, generous temper, her robust appearance and quick growth, every thing renewed him to us, as well as the expressive and animated countenance that seized the eye of every stranger, and the heart of every one of the family. Indeed she was too lovely, and, till a week before her death, was the very picture of health and vigour. What a profusion of love was heaped upon her, during the period of her short life. Her brothers and sisters, her father, all doated upon her. But her heavenly Father has now vindicated his right, and punished our presumptuous partiality. When I am abler, I shall tax your patience with a recital of the aggravating circumstances of her death. I can now only tell you, that on Sunday, the 12th, she made her way, through the keenest agonies, to everlasting felicity.

“Ye that e’er lost an angel, pity me.”

Never child gave so little trouble and so much pleasure to parents. I well know how rich I am in remaining blessings, and how both reason and

religion forbid repining, because he who has bestowed so many good gifts, sees fit in his own manner to resume them. When the prayers I daily offer have the desired effect, I may bow patiently to the divine decree ; but now, my dearest friend, a cup can only hold its fill, and mine is filled to the very brim. Were all my earthly comforts removed, I could only grieve, as I do now, as much as my nature can sustain, though I might mourn longer and more excusably. Farewell. Be charitable, for you do not know how you could bear this.

LETTER LXVIII.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, Sept. 8, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND !

MY last sombre epistle has, by this time, reached you, and awakened all your sympathy. It affords a ray of comfort to me at this distance, to think you feel with, and for me. Those who are immersed, as most people around you are, in eager pursuits of pleasure and ambition, can have no idea of distress like mine. They have not the simplicity of taste which enjoys and feels the attractive charm of infant innocence. Can those who grasp at a thousand shadows which render

the mind both callous and fastidious, by their emptiness and variety, contemplate with steadfast gaze and ever new delight, the dawning of sensibility, the unfolding blooms of intelligence and affection? It is in the shady vales, the obscure retreats of life, far from the noise of turbulent passions, and the parade of splendid vanities, that the soft and kindly affections root deep, and flourish fair. There all the pleasures they afford, are tasted in perfection; but it is there, when these tender ties are broken, that anguish is most pungent. The twin sister of my Petrina has been very unwell. I regarded her danger with composure that excited my own wonder. Perhaps like Burns,

“ With firm, resolv’d, despairing eye
I view each aimed dart,
Since one has cut my dearest tie,
And quivers in my heart.”

O may I be forgiven for these effusions of despondency, and enabled to fix my thoughts on that awful day when I fondly hope to recognize my children among the blessed heirs of immortality. O! if this hope be sinful, I am indeed a great sinner; it feeds my imagination, and cherishes my heart, and, at intervals, soothes my woe-worn spirits into a sublime tranquillity. Sure we shall not forget our fellow-travellers in this vale of mortality, in the bright regions of blest futurity. We cannot retain a partial recollection of past events, that is, we cannot separate the retrospection of

them from the remembrance of those who have enjoyed and suffered with us in this transient state of probation. How can we remember the numberless mercies received, the many dangers escaped, and temptations resisted, which will furnish themes for praise, at least during our noviciate in bliss—How, I say, can we remember these, without, at the same time, calling back those who were our associates in suffering, those who lived in our bosoms, and were to us the objects of an innocent and pure affection, such as helps to preserve us from the contagion of the world, and keeps the heart warm, and open to the best impressions?

Mean, obscure, and dull as every thing must appear to you here, I have so made up my mind, and so fore-warned and fore-armed you, that I look forward to next May, as the time that is to relieve my mind of its burden. I am in no pain about finding out a tolerable companion for you. I shall set enquirers on foot very early, and will engage that you shall not find yourself a stranger here. At any rate, you shall not sojourn without benefit of clergy. As for your *Cloten*, I can only say, 'tis strange—

“ A woman that bears all down with her brain,
Should yield the world this ass.”

* * * * *

You well remember a time when the *amor patriæ* burnt with uncommon and imprudent ardour in the breast of your friend. Now, though I used

to fight "tooth and nail" for Scotland, I had not then reflection enough to discriminate in my defensive operations ; that there were two or three causes equally dear to me, blended with my defence of Mother Meg—virtuous and dignified poverty, elegance of sentiment that lives in the heart and conduct, and subsists independent of local and transitory modes, a degree of amiable simplicity among the middle ranks of life, and of modest decorum, resulting from pious impressions in the lower, not often to be met with in that class. For the ease of our social intercourse, and our general good will towards strangers, we are certainly indebted to our former connexion with France. Our national pride and poverty, so well known, and so generally stigmatized, is, notwithstanding, of great advantage to us. From the one we derive a certain dignity, which when joined with our ordinary sense of integrity, preserves us from mean and unworthy actions. Our poverty, again, produces frugality and temperance, for which, I hear you observe, we are not much to be thanked. Observe the inference.

* * * * *

Clanship, doubtless, narrows the affections, and produces many absurd and unpleasing associations ; yet it is better to love forty or fifty people warmly and exclusively on absurd grounds, than to love nobody at all ; and then pretend to love all the world (which does not care a straw for you), as the Parisian philosophers do, on whom the de-

mons of skepticism and discord will soon visit all the mischiefs they are doing, and the far greater mischiefs they occasion. My poor dear Odyssey tells a fine story of Æolus having the winds in a bag, and what havock followed when they were unskillfully let out. Now I think popular writers possess bags, in which those winds are contained that blow the embers of discontent into flames of destruction. What a dreadful account is to be made for the use of power so unlimited! No despotism is like that practised by the rulers of opinion; but I believe it is become customary to have no settled opinion, but to keep the mind open for the reception of experimental whimsies. I feel the water deeper every moment, and will return to avoid drowning. Shallow streams are safest; therefore I bid you heartily farewell.

LETTER LXIX.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Oct. 4, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAD a hurried letter from you more than a month ago. Lest I forget again to tell you, I have heard twice from Miss O. since she went into Gloucestershire, where she is very happy with her aunt, to whom she must be a great com-

fort. The health and freedom she enjoys in that peaceful retreat seem to have given a new turn to her spirits. She is evidently more cheerful, and makes reflections on her situation similar to your own. Her invaluable friend has, I hope by this time, received her at London. I always forgot to tell you Mr. Grant's answer to your query, "whether he had changed his mind about never more going from home. He bids me say he has been kissing his door-posts ever since his return, and always finds his devotion to his household gods much increased by any suspension of the usual worship. Yet I doubt not, the inducement of being able to carry these *teraphim* with him, might induce him to travel a good way in a given direction. What a stroller I have been this summer ! When children came one at a time, I staid at home, and attended to them with great care ; now they come in pairs, I scamper away like a *hen* ostrich, or a fine lady. I began my career by going to my father's in spring. That was on business, and I only staid two days. You know where we met in June. When I returned, I was obliged, in consequence of an old engagement, to visit some friends in the lower part of the country, at a most beautiful place about ten miles distance. I left C. in the house of the pastor there, whom you have heard me mention as a person of fine taste, superior abilities, and extensive information. I should have told you, how I happened, at this time, to go to Fort Augustus. I have a

cousin, who succeeded my father in his office there, and possesses a large farm in the neighbourhood. He had a most promising family growing up, and was very prosperous in the world, having fallen into the succession of a small estate since he came there. But, lately, they met with the deepest affliction, in consequence of having lost, at one time, their favourite son and daughter, the one about eighteen, the other nineteen, years old. Their father, always infirm and delicate, fell into a dangerous illness soon after, from which he is now slowly recovering. Mr. Grant had to go over to attend a church court, to be held there last week, and I accompanied him. We took an odd fancy, for grave people ten years wedded; and, what was most to be wondered at, the proposal was not mine, to whom you would most readily impute it. It was, to leave the vehicle and Angus at the foot of Corryarrick, to go the circuitous road, which you may remember, while we took the shepherd's foot-path from the bridge, which, leading down a steep, where no carriage can venture, led into the long-known, dear-loved recesses on the borders of the Tarfe, where the hazel-woods, the echoing *Drimen Duie*, and the charming waterfall that I have so often described to you, lay in our path. Now you are not to suppose that we were so much of a Corydan and Pastora, as to come here for the mere purpose of enjoying sylvan beauties, and reviving tender recollections. It was humane, for it saved the poor

horse ; it was prudent, for it saved near two miles ; it was civil, for it managed our time and road so as to put it in our power to visit our friends at Culachy, to whose abode this pathway was a short cut. But you have no idea of the wild beauties of this walk ; their shades, sacred so often to contemplation and to friendship, have improved in solemnity and variety in the ten years interregnum. When the triad used to find such pleasure in haunting these deep retreats, the trees were not near so lofty, the incursions of hunters were more frequent, the country was more populous ; but now the coppice is become a grove, whose tenants have increased, conscious of their safety. Oh ! that you could see these hazel bowers, and the light festoons of wild honeysuckle pendent from their topmost branches ! That you could hear the sweet responses of native musick, the deep murmur of the dark and secret stream, and the mysterious echo of *Drimen Duie* !* These

.....

* *Drimen Duie*, often mentioned in these letters, is a very singularly shaped eminence, near three miles above Fort Augustus, in the deep woody recesses of Glentarfe. It projects forward into an angle formed by opposing precipices, on the opposite side of the Tarfe, from which it is divided by the river, which makes a quick turn round the base of this beautiful height, the summit of which is flat and covered with verdure and flowers ; while the steep sides are adorned with the most beautiful shrubs ; and the opposite caverns reverberate every sound in such a manner that musick in this spot has a singular and fine effect. The rocky basin (mentioned also in the next page) receives a small fall of water which descends from the lofty rock that bounds Glentarfe, half a mile below *Drimen Duie*.

are, indeed, like sounds

“ Sent by spirits to mortals good,
Or th’ unseen genius of the wood.”

Do you think we could pass by the beautiful rocky basin I have so often told you of, where a little tributary stream falls in broken rills down a steep rock, decked with fantastick tufts of flowers and nodding plants ? We did not pass it by, but stood a while on the brink, recollecting the associate of our wild wanderings, and the unequalled melody of the richest and mellowest wood-notes that ever met my ear. For here we used to rest and listen to “ songs divine to hear ;” either such plaintive notes as the “ voice of Cona sung,” given in his native language, or our own sweetest pastoral lays, sung with simplicity, taste, and expression, that will never meet again in these days of artifice.

“ O, lost Ophelia, sweetly flow’d the day,
To feel thy musick with my soul agree ;
To taste the beauties of thy heartfelt lay,
To taste, and fancy it was dear to thee !”

I could not help saying this to my companion, here, where her image seemed to hover. We paid the due tribute of tenderness to the memory of our hard-fated friend ; tenderness unmingled with regret ; for we were pleased to think she was escaped from a world, where she, in particular, had so much to suffer, and so little to enjoy. Full of her resemblance, we followed the course of the stream which led to the house

of her favourite brother. He was not at home ; but his pretty little wife welcomed us with a grace and cordiality that made us regret having only a single hour to spend with her. When we emerged from " the valley of vision," and saw Loch Ness from the eminence on which the house stands, I felt as if time had run back ; but that was a mere momentary sensation. I will not tell you how glad my relations were to see me, or how the villagers flocked about me, to tell all their intervening history ; but, finding it vain to hope for solitude and quiet, to perform one of my customary *acts of recollection*, I rose one morning at five, and went round the boundaries of our old domain and the Fort, then crossed the bridge of Oich, and from the rocks of Inchnacardach, took a wide survey of the lake, then a perfect mirror, and the noble steep of Sigchurman, decked with fantastick wreaths of rolling mist, that changed their form every moment as the sun broke out upon them. I retired towards Inchnacardach, where I mused, undisturbed, till fancy had her fill. I felt like a person transplanted to the poetical shades, who wanders among myrtle groves and elysian vales in pensive contemplation, and sees the shadowy forms of those beloved in life, and mourned in death, glide silent by him. The sweet recesses, and sequestered scenes, in the vicinity, are become more beautiful than ever. I took a kind of solemn delight in thus retracing my wonted paths among them ; and, you may well believe, fancy

peopled them with the shades of the departed. The gentle spirit of poor Mrs. N. was not absent. Her death, or rather her release from life, I could think of with serenity, when I recollected how much she deserved, and how little she obtained, in this state of probation. Her father, whom I have so often looked on with indifference, I regarded with unmixed compassion. Any thing so forlorn and helpless I have not seen. He seemed pleased to see me for her sake, and tried in trembling accents, to speak of her. My cousin seemed gratified by our visit, and I was glad we made it. I saw several people to whom I wish well, whom I shall probably never see again. Then my mind was so easy with regard to the family, and the little Gemini, as Charlotte had the entire charge of them, who is the very best deputy matron I ever knew. You see I have made the most of this summer, being the first, since I was married, that I was not *very particularly* engaged at home.

It will refresh you, after all this tragi-pastoral, to hear that Gwynn is married quite to his mind, and is the happiest of human beings. Though no one had more the habits and notions of a confirmed bachelor, yet, formed only for domestick life, he languished in tasteless apathy, wanting he knew not what, for he was carefully taught to despise matrimony. He has got a very good little woman, with an easy temper, and just as much intellect as he would wish for, who loves him, and has brought him a fine child, in which he

takes great pleasure. All this fills the void in his heart, and the vacancy in his time, that made him formerly most deplorably listless, though the best hearted creature imaginable. A brother of his wife who died abroad, has left her a pretty little fortune ; so he has, every way, drawn a prize in the lottery of marriage. Good connexions are not wanting, for the lady is one of Mr. Grant's hundred kinswomen, and, consequently, M. Gwynn is now allied to us. What a privilege ! Now that I have given you no brief abstract of my summer campaign since I saw you at our assignation in Canmore, you must needs do justice to my diligence in recording important transactions. Though you should not hear from me for half a year to come, these *commentaries* will bear witness of my unshaken fidelity. Now let me hear you venture, after this, to say you have *nothing material*. In return for these reveries of solitude, you owe me something from the busy haunts of men. Retirement at the Fairley is a mere pretence. You go to be merry, and at ease, among your intimates, and then call it retiring. We found all well at home, and the little *gemini* the finest amusing little creatures. How lucky for you that I am near the end of my paper, or they might

“Live in description, and look *squat* in song ;”
for *squat* they both are, this moment, on the floor. But I cannot “paint, ere they change, the Cynthia of the minute,” though you should take an interest in them as the favourite playthings of your affectionate friend !

LETTER LXX.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Oct. 7, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

BY a letter from Charlotte, while at Edinburgh, I find there is one from you on the way ; so that I can write again without descending from my dignity ; and I can do this with the more ease of mind, as my little twins are now recovered from the small-pox. They are the best children I ever had, and very healthy and pleasant-looking. My eldest girl is now staying here, and your name-daughter with Duncan at the Fort.

* * * * *

These are the outlines, as far as I can draw them, of this triad. You will smile, and call it a panegyrick. Though very unlike each other in many respects, one characteristick feature of similitude runs through them all. They are all artless and disinterested : no traces of mean cunning or selfish grasping. This is an indication of an enlarged mind ; and, besides the future promise, has a present good effect. Whatever they have they share with each other with readiness and pleasure ; so there is one source of wrangling and debate stopped. They all give pretty strong proofs of feeling as well as understanding ; and it is by the management of these feelings that I propose, in a great

measure, to sway them, till their minds open and strengthen, so that one may reason with them without teaching them *parrotism*. This, perhaps, might not be a safe way in the world ; but, if ever children can be brought up with uncorrupted hearts, they have a chance of being so. Their number, and being altogether strangers to those indulgences which wealth and ease admit of, will entirely prevent their being softened into a sickly sensibility, by those feelings being exercised. For the art lies in directing them to those ends for which it is presumed they were bestowed. In the first place, I am at the utmost pains to fix their affections ; we should be unhappy if we thought they loved any one near so well as their parents. Indulgence will not produce this effect solely, for to that there must at last be limits ; and a child, who is very seldom refused any thing, considers refusal as injury. When this happens oftener, the fear of being mortified makes him reflect before he makes any request, whether it be a proper one. One or two indulged children might be indured ; but a large family of them would be Tophet and Gehenna. The thing is, to endeavour early so to manage their feelings and affections, that they shall shrink from the idea of giving pain to those they love. Having made sure of their affection, the next point is to secure their esteem, that it may stamp authority on my decisions, and preserve that respect so necessary for maintaining my influence. Shall I confess to you, that the

most finished coquette was never at greater pains to appear to advantage before her lovers, than I am to conceal every defect and weakness from my children. Thus I endeavour, by exciting their veneration, to preserve my ascendancy over their flexible and unformed minds. My great object is to form their hearts to an ardent love of virtue, to a generous admiration of superior excellence, and to compassion, not only for the weaknesses but even the vices of their fellow creatures. I would have them cherish those pure and delicate sentiments, which make the vices of others not appear to them as objects of acrimonious censure and self-applauding comparison ; that they shall as habitually turn from the view of human nature thus degraded and deformed, as we do from any object that is peculiarly disgusting to our senses. In that case, they will turn their eyes with pleasure on every view of the human character which still retains any traces of that divine image in which we were created ;

“ Tho’ sullied and dishonour’d, still divine.”

It is not by formal maxims, or frigid precepts, that we teach them the great doctrines of morality ; yet we are continually in a powerful, though indirect manner impressing them on their minds. I never forbid them formally to steal or covet, to envy or traduce, because, “ they have the commandments,” and are taught to reverence them as the dictates of inspiration ; and because I never observed in them the least symptom of a

sordid or malignant inclination. But in my general discourse, in the conversation I have with their father, or others, in their presence, I always set the contrary virtues in the strongest, fairest light; avoid as much as possible, talking of other people's follies or crimes; and, should they be casually mentioned, pass them lightly over with an air of indifference or disgust, not calculated to excite their attention or curiosity. 'Tis a sad thing that children should be taught, by the example of their seniors, to pursue vice into all its dirty recesses; and to triumph in their superiority and discernment in making discoveries, which when they are made, afford neither profit nor pleasure. I prefer the more pleasing task of insinuating instruction, and awaking the generous thrill of emulative desire, by pointing out to their enamoured view all that is great, lovely, or excellent, in the characters of the living or the dead; nay, even of those that never lived or died, except in the creative imagination of poets and philosophers. Not but that I greatly prefer examples drawn from reality. What is necessary to be known of evil, by way of guard or prevention, may be very soon acquired; for the whole world are in a combination to impress that kind of instruction. When I have warmed their hearts, and enriched their minds, with abstracts of all that wisdom and devotion, truth, honour, magnanimity, and tenderness have done to adorn and exalt our nature, I descend a step lower in the scale of ex-

istence, and make them observe and admire the fidelity, affection, maternal tenderness, attachment, and gentleness, which are seen in little birds and domestick animals. All this helps to impress still stonger on their minds the sense I would have them entertain of these qualities whenever they meet with them. After thus endeavouring to give a right direction to that generosity and tenderness with which it has pleased God to endow them, I would (though I know them myself) be at no great pains to teach them those refinements in manners which it is become fashionable to talk so much about. The kind and degree of good breeding I should most approve and wish for, will naturally result from a well principled mind, a feeling heart, and a just and cultivated taste. Especially when the manners of those they look up to for examples are not devoid of that softness which delicacy of sentiment always produces. Forms and punctilio are the mere superstition of good breeding, easily acquired and of little value. The ease of fashionable manners, the determined self-confident ease, nothing but mixing much with fashionable people can give : at least I should suspect a little *native bronze*, where it grew wild. A person, who, to a good, and in some measure cultivated, understanding, adds modesty, gentleness, and some refinement of taste, may not be elegant, but can scarcely be vulgar. And such manners may, by a slight culture, be improved into elegant simplicity, of all elegant things the

most desirable. Though elegance should prove unattainable, I would still have that simplicity, both in their taste and manners which would be most suitable to the humble station in which Providence has placed them ; and, at the same time, have their minds impressed with that true dignity, which is compatible with any station which one may suppose the daughter of a gentleman, in the ordinary course of life, either to raise or sink into. You know what my religious opinions are, and what unspeakable importance I attach to them ; so you may believe we are at all times anxious to leave this invaluable legacy unimpaired to those who have so little beside to inherit from us. On these subjects you and I have but one opinion ; and I am so unfashionable as to think, one never can begin too soon to direct a child's hopes and fears to their proper and ultimate object ; though reason must not be addressed till it unfolds, for fear of teaching children to use words without annexing ideas to them, which is just the parrotism that I dislike. You will wonder to see me dwell so much on cultivating the taste, when I am such an admirer of undisguised nature ; but I respect taste as an outguard of virtue ; a just and regulated taste would make the levity, the absurdity, the cunning and meanness, which often accompany depraved inclinations, more obvious and disgusting. Besides, it places every charm of all-beauteous nature, every grace and ornament of ingenious art, in the fairest point of view ;

which has the happiest effect upon the heart and temper. Time and paper so confine me, that I must reserve all that crowds on me to answer the objections you will naturally make to this mode of education. My children, you will say, after being brought up to my wish, will be, after all, but amiable ignoramuses, unacquainted with human life, and unable, from their extreme simplicity, to ward off the blows of malice, or avoid the snares of deceit. Some acquaintance with human depravity, you will say, is necessary for enabling us to act with due caution in a corrupt world. I answer, that they will find too many instructors in this crooked science, and know but too soon what every one is too willing and able to teach. Delicacy and a high principle is a better guard than cunning and suspicion. A person possessed of the former qualities, feels not at home or easy with artificial characters, and shrinks unconsciously from the approach of the callous and designing. A large family is a little community within itself. The variety of dispositions, the necessity of making occasional sacrifices of humour and inclination, and, at other times, resisting aggression or encroachment, when properly directed by an overruling mind, teach both firmness and flexibility, as the occasion may call forth the exercise of those qualities. Respect and submission to the elder branches of a family, tenderness and forbearance to the younger, all tend more to moral improvement, if properly managed, than volumes

of maxims and rules of conduct. With regard to modesty and deference too, people in our situation must needs enforce those in self defence. In a cottage, where children are continually under the eye of their parents, and confined within narrow bounds, petulance would be purgatory. This detail of mine wants nothing but a little method and arrangement to be the ape of a lecture. Regard, however, with indulgence, the hasty sketch, which conveys to you some idea of the manner in which we endeavour to discharge the most important of all social obligations, though a most confused and imperfect abstract of our own very imperfect scheme. You will be partial to it, merely because it is ours. If you are disappointed, my best apology must be reminding you how often you have solicited this brief chronicle. Now reward my tedious blear-eyed vigil, by giving me as minute an account of your family as I have given you of mine. Mr. Grant begs to be warmly remembered to Mr. Smith, who, I trust, has not forgotten that I can't endure to be forgotten. I am charmed with the accounts I hear of Mrs. B.'s little family. Make my love acceptable to her, and believe me, in spite of matrimony, distance, and Drimochter, most truly, most tenderly, yours.

LETTER LXXI.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, Oct. 14, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU may believe I received with very great pleasure an assurance of what before I greatly doubted, that you will once more breathe the pure mountain gales, impregnated with wholesome heath, and diffusive of the spirit of wholesome poverty; the train of rigid, sinewy, and hard-featured virtues superadded. You see, notwithstanding your good-humoured irony, the hypothesis of situation continues to be a favourite one with me, and I despair not of making you, on rational grounds, a proselyte to my opinion. When France was the land of wit and refinement, if not of wisdom, it was a maxim of one of its best authors, that we are all in some degree, *les animaux d'habitude*, that, in short, forms of life tincture our virtues with their peculiar die, and not only often produce, but in some measure excuse and palliate our vices. This is no flattering hypothesis for me. It always humbles me in my own eyes, by reminding me, that from the examples I have seen, from the pure precepts, and safe obscurity under the influence of which I was educated, far from all that corrupts the heart and dazzles the imagination; I say when I reflect on

all these collateral aids to the propensities of a warm heart, in which the seeds of truth were early sown, I must in common honesty disclaim your compliments. So circumstanced, I must have been a monster of depravity, had I acted through life with less practical reverence for virtue than I have done. Though I have all the abhorrence of vice natural to a person of strong feeling, living much out of its reach ; yet, when I see, as it often happens, strong flashes of generosity, probity, and humanity, breaking through the gloom of mental sloth and ignorance, and casting a transient lustre over characters, debased by habitual vices, which too early intercourse with a bad world have produced, my heart melts to think how amiable those might have been, had they gone out into the world, fortified with good principles, and acquainted with sublimer pleasures than the world has to bestow. - - - - - Now here are two marked instances of virtues so modified, that have had no small influence on your own mind.

I see you have greatly mistaken my political creed, which is borrowed from a much sounder judgment than my own, and much nearer your own than you are aware of. The only real grievance Scotland labours under, originates with landholders ; perhaps, more remotely, in commerce ; since the tide of wealth which commerce has poured into the northern part of the island, has led our trading people to contend with our gentry, in all the exterior elegances of life. The latter

seem stung with a jealous solicitude to preserve their wonted ascendancy over their new rivals. This pre-eminence can only be kept up by heightening at all hazards their lands. Thus the ancient adherents of their families are displaced. These, having been accustomed to a life of devotion, simplicity, and frugality, and being bred to endure hunger, fatigue, and hardship, while following their cattle over the mountains, or navigating the stormy seas that surround their islands, form the best resource of the state, when difficulties, such as the inhabitants of a happier region are strangers to, must be encountered for its service. When we consider this world as merely a passing scene, at the conclusion of which the question will not be, who has supported the most consequential character, but who has acted best the part allotted, we must look upon that as the best destination, which affords the widest scope for the exercise and effects of various virtues. In civilized society, wealth does, and must give influence ; but it would be a wretched state indeed, in which wealth should be the only distinction. A man whose ancestors have rendered themselves for a course of time eminent in the state, as generally some among them, to whom he looks back for example, and whose virtues and abilities reflect lustre on his descendants. Though the depravity of our nature appears but too conspicuously among the higher classes of mankind, yet among these too, talents and merit appear with

greater splendour, and are of more ornament and service to mankind, than the same qualities in their inferiors. Condescension and affability, for instance, would vanish, if we were all equal. The charity and hospitality of a nobleman will be more admired and imitated than the same qualities in a wealthy tradesman :

“ A saint in crape, is twice a saint in lawn.”

In short, every thing that decorates, or enlightens, is best seen from an eminence. Nothing but pure patriotism, great poverty, and perfect equality, an assemblage we shall never see combined, could make a republick on a large scale at all supportable. Believe me, I have no prejudice against monarchy, mildly exercised, or duly limited ; I consider it as an institution, naturally growing out of that patriarchal sovereignty, which, in the primitive ages, the parent, doubly revered for his many years and great experience, was wont to exercise over his numerous and obedient offspring. In a state, where no unalloyed good is indulged to us, we often shew our best wisdom, when of many evils we choose the least. For my own part, though I were so French and so new-fangled as to consider all legal governments as monsters let loose to eat up liberty, I should still prefer the three-headed Cerberus, whose salutary terrors prevent the condemned from entering the regions of bliss, like our threefold government, whose terrors only affect the wicked ; even this, I say, I should prefer to the many-headed hydra, who,

breathing death and contagion indiscriminately, may represent the barbarous genius of mob government. Now that I am got into classical allusions, permit me to *Burkify* a little longer, and to assure you that I should be very much grieved to see that good old lady, or gentleman, (I know not which to call it,) the Constitution, cut up and dismembered, because it has a few wrinkles or gray hairs, or to see Medea's old kettle put on again, while Mr. — and Lord L. stood chief cooks, and Tom Paine scullion. I think I see Mary W—— and so many more publick-spirited ladies bringing aprons-full of herbs, like witches, to the magick cauldron. The ways of the Almighty baffle our penetration. This temporary triumph of irreligion and false philosophy will tear the mask off the monster, who, wrapt in the specious disguise of moderation, and speaking the language of sentiment and liberality, has for near a century past been undermining the foundations of religion and morality. What pains have been taken to promulgate that profound discovery, "that bigotry and religious zeal have done more hurt in society, than skepticism and all the mere speculative evils of philosophy." The reason is plain. Great bodies of people were confederated together, under the influence of bigotry and superstition. The crafty and ambitious few made the passions of the well-meaning, though ignorant, many, subservient to their cruelty and avarice, and thus produced those tragedies which deform the face of

history. But hitherto these enlightened philosophers have been dispersed here and there, without numbers or cohesion to enable them to begin their practical operations. We have never, till now, seen a nation of refined enlightened infidels governed by the dictates of philosophy ; and it is to be hoped that the world will be terrified and warned by the dreadful spectacle. I here dedicate to you the first-fruits of my pen upon the arduous and intricate subject of politicks ; and as I am pretty much of opinion it will also be my last excursion into those unexplored regions, pray regard it with some fellow feeling, it being, like yourself, an only child. Mr. Grant has not yet conquered his astonishment at your growing fat. " Bless me, Miss Ourry fat ! 'tis impossible : " his fancy had formed you a mere skeleton. A few gray hairs begin already to adorn my temples. The small portion which fell to my share of " celestial rosy red," has most ambitiously forsaken its native station, and mounted up to my " lack-lustre eyes." Constant solicitude and the cares of the nursery have made me

" Like a meagre mope adust and thin,

In a loose night-gown of my own wan skin."

I will describe no longer. Come, see, and conquer. Receive numberless loves from those I best love, and believe me

Yours, from her heart, and unaltered.

LETTER LXXII.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, Oct. 30, 1791.

YOU will not let me alone, nor will I give up my point. In spite of your raillery, I insist that the ties of blood bind stronger, and the duties of relationship are better understood in the Highlands, than any where else. I by no means except the Low country of Scotland. This too is not a reflected moral sense of duty, but the mere effect of honest habits and salutary prejudices. 'Tis a singular instance of the Almighty's goodness, that, in these poor barren countries, from which he has withheld so many of the blessings he bestows on others, the few who possess any portion of wealth should be stimulated by those kindly propensities to diffuse it among their remote relations. These last, besides the habitual pride and indolence attending imagined high birth, have not, from education or situation, the means of procuring a livelihood, as in wealthy and commercial countries. This, no doubt, forms no pleasant chain of dependence, but in this, as in many other instances,

"What happier nature shrinks at with affright,
The hard inhabitants contend is right."

Though I applaud this reverence for kindred, I do not benefit by it; but on the contrary, though

I regard my neighbours with the utmost esteem and good will, I cannot give away any thing so precious as friendship to any one, who, after all, would prefer the most insignificant of her third cousins to me. Believe me, my children, though prepared to love and admire you, are neither taught to expect a beauty, wit, or fine lady; but one who has no small merit in disclaiming pretensions to all those envied characters, and associating, by a rare combination, softness of manners with strength of mind, vivacity with reflection, and that common useful sense which hourly discerns the proper and expedient in ordinary life, with that delicacy of perception which apprehends and tastes all that enlightens the understanding and enlarges the heart, in knowledge or sentiment. If, as you say, no wandering rivulet renovates your powers, you are surely like the Leeward Islands, visited by frequent water-spouts, that is, inspirations, that fertilize your intellects. I certainly have an ample cistern which retains all I acquire: this common observers mistake for a fountain. Tell Miss M. I love her as well as one can love a rival. Mr. Grant sends you his benediction, and rejoices to think your portly figure will do credit to his housekeeping, though I should still lament my leanness.

Adieu, dearest.

LETTER LXXIII.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, Nov. 19, 1791.

YOU cannot conceive, indeed you cannot, how reviving the cordial warmth of your last letter was to my drooping heart—a heart from which all the cares and all the tendernesses arising out of a family, so large, so helpless, so loving and beloved, cannot exclude you. For the years I thought you dead, and when you were dead to me, your image would very often recur with a short quick pang, like that which now accompanies the angelick form of my dear lost Petrina, when it beams across my fancy; for indeed I do not sit down to grieve, but endeavour to pay the best tribute to her memory, by a sedulous discharge of my various and complicated duties to those who loved her so tenderly while she was lent to us. I think of every thing I see with a reference to how you will like it. I foolishly think that you will be as much pleased as I am at all the budding virtues and graces with which my sanguine fancy decorates my children; little considering that, from the external elegance to which you have been accustomed, they must at best appear to you, at first, a parcel of awkward cubs, unformed and overgrown. The culture of the heart is our great object. We let the acquisition of knowledge,

manners, &c. go on *piano* till we make sure of the main point. Where the natural temper is mild and generous, and theirs appears very much so, deep impressions of integrity and early habits of benevolence must communicate to the manners the unconstrained air of open rectitude, and that animated softness which a disinterested wish to please always produces. Indeed we have few maxims; one of those few is, that it is easier to be than to seem.

* * * * *

She* inquired about you of her brother, who spoke so highly of you, that she was quite delighted with the thoughts of making such an addition to the stock of living merit within the circle of her personal knowledge, and pleases herself with the thoughts of bringing you here herself, and setting you down at our little gate, where she hopes to meet yet another *white crow*, to express it elegantly. There is nothing like concluding a period sublimely; yet I should not conclude without telling you that Mr. Macintosh is a man worth taking a journey to see, not of active benevolence only, but of restless, impetuous benevolence. I will teach you to venerate him at more leisure, having now no time to do him justice. - - - - - I will no more wander into the maze of politicks, being sufficiently occupied with the care of our limited (very limited) monarchy at home, in which

* Mrs. Macintosh, of Dunchattan, with whose brother, Dr. John Moore, Miss Ourry was well acquainted.

I participate, by turns, the legislative and executive powers, and though I never aim at despotism, try to keep firm to my *veto*. Our tumults in the north appear aggravated and formidable to you in London, which is the region of political panicks. Honest John Bull is very liable to the vapours ; and the stocks

“ Turn at the touch of joy or woe,
But, turning, tremble too ;”

of which those, who live by feeling their pulse, take the advantage. The only cause of complaint in Scotland is the rage for sheep-farming. The families removed on that account, are often as numerous as our own. The poor people have neither language, money, nor education, to push their way any where else ; though they often possess feelings and principles, that might almost rescue human nature from the reproach which false philosophy and false refinement have brought upon it. Though the poor Ross-shire people were driven to desperation, they even then acted under a sense of rectitude, touched no property, and injured no creature. As for the mobs in towns, they are mere ebullitions of ignorance and wantonness in a people who were never so rich before, and to whom wealth and freedom are such novelties, that they know not the true use or bounds of either. I got your letters regularly from the quarter-deck, and wrote to you by the Fingalian cover. Tell Miss M. I respect her for her own sake, and love her for yours.

Adieu ! my dearest N.

LETTER LXXIV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, Jan. 21, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,

THE deep sense I feel of the kindness expressed in your much valued letter, and the consolation which the acquisition of regard, from a character so estimable, affords, even under the pressure of my present affliction, encourages me to write to you, even now, when I am very unfit to communicate my ideas, except where they will be received with the most partial indulgence. I know it is unbecoming, nay, almost unchristianly, in me, to use the emphatick language of sorrow, in speaking of an infant's happy transition from the dangers and snares of this chequered scene to a state of stable felicity. She is departed before she has known sin or sorrow, and before we could have room to judge whether those beautiful blossoms of sprightliness, generosity, and tenderness, which charmed us so much in her enticing little ways, would ever ripen into the expected fruit. My reason not only acquiesces in the justice of the dispensation, but my heart so far acknowledges its mercy, that could a wish bring my darling back to my bosom, I think I would not form that wish. She was so unusually strong and healthy, that, we dreamt not of fear till it became too late. She spoke to me in a clear, distinct voice, shewing

tokens of the fondest affection, three hours before her death. Thus, you see, the stroke was very sudden. Then we had such delight in her ; not only for her own sake, but for the great resemblance she bore to her dear departed brother, whose every look and gesture was restored in her. So that her death was just like losing him over again. It is also so melancholy to see the poor thing that remains, wandering like a ghost, and constantly bewailing her sister.

* * * * *

Things are far better as they are. I once thought nothing would have made me so happy as to renew in town some of my earliest attachments and former habits of life ; but how are we governed by events ! An incident, which to an indifferent person, would appear of no great moment in so large a family as ours, has entirely altered my views. I see nothing now so desirable as, by residing here, to ensure taking my final residence with those who were so dear to me in life. I have said a great deal too much on this subject ; but you will forgive me for indulging my reflections at the expense of your patience. There are few things that could gratify me more than to find you so cordially interested in poor Charlotte. I am not a little pleased to find your sentiments and mine, concerning her, coincide so entirely. Her integrity of heart, her sincerity, and general rectitude of intention, are such as, to one that knows her intimately, are sufficient to ensure esteem,

and even affection, beyond all that shines, and all that pleases, in those, whom happier fortunes, and a more finished education, have set in a fairer point of view. I am very well satisfied to find that she is going to stay for some time at Mr. D.'s.

- - - - I hope she will take particular care to please those who are so well worth pleasing. I conclude, from her thorough confidence in you, from whom no thought of her heart is concealed, that you know of a visitor whom she daily expects. This visitor is certainly an object of compassion. That attachment, from the beginning so singular and romantick, seems daily increasing. I have so very good an opinion of the person in question, and so very bad an opinion of the safety or stability of such premature engagements - - - - -

What to judge or to determine, I am utterly at a loss. I leave her then entirely to your direction, who, with equal warmth of good will towards her, have more judgment, experience and knowledge of the world.

* * * * *

I have received Mr. M.'s friendly letter, and feel the full force of his judicious and affectionate consolation. The hopes of seeing you here, at no very distant period, please me, even now, when very few things indeed have power to interest

Your obliged and faithful, &c.

LETTER LXXV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Feb. 17, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,

ONCE more returned from the limits of that undiscovered country, on whose dim-seen confines our hopes and fears are continually hovering, I devote one of the first efforts of my pen to you, who are so well entitled to every mark of grateful attention on my part, on my own account, as well as that of others, who engross my tenderest cares, and occasion me perpetual anxiety. For, though I am satisfied that they are much happier and more attended to than they could be with me, even the scenes of gaiety and pleasure, that I know them to be engaged in, are a source of inquietude to my fond apprehensions. "Perfect love," we are told, "casteth out fear." That may be the case when it is fixed on the All-perfect Object, who is alone worthy to excite and engross it; but when our weak human affections are engaged by beings as imperfect as ourselves, fear and doubt continually mingle with them. When my young travellers return to the cottage, their allotted home, it will require more than common reflection and solidity to reconcile them to still life, frugality, and homely habits; though after all, I sincerely believe it is the state most akin to safe-

ty and comfort. I am sorry to find those mutable beings, who change their sentiments and opinions so often and so easily, never once think of changing for the right, or even for a better system.

----- The less one thinks of human depravity, the better; one can't mend it; and 'tis only being either sorry or angry to very little purpose. Charlotte says, she has been at a ball lately, which concludes her publick exhibitions for the season. I am glad of it; for though I must own my vanity is much flattered by the admiration which her person and manners have excited, and that I am gratified by the pleasure she receives, my judgment and my fears militate against her growing familiar to the publick eye. Her situation is too peculiar and delicate, to make it safe for her to attract so much attention. This will not fail to turn the jealous and scrutinizing eye of female envy upon her. Publick admiration is a thing that soon dies of itself. A person who might never have had a wish for it, will feel forlorn at its departure. Besides, a person admired solely for beauty, will be always considered as a mere pretty girl; her merit will never be thought of. My young daughter, by the by, has as much merit as any lady of her age can have; for she is very quiet and never disobeys me. Having few good things to bestow on her, we resolved to begin with giving her a good name, and have called her Anne Ourry. Let me not be forgotten on the *Dune*; and believe me incapable of forgetting its inhabitants.

LETTER LXXVI.

TO MISS OURRY.

Laggan, April 2, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I KNOW it will give you concern to hear that my silence for most part of this winter, was owing to illness. This, though not dangerous or alarming, was of such a nature as to throw the most oppressive gloom upon my spirits. I am none of those querulous beings who delight in brooding over evils, and oppressing their friends with all that troubles them. That sanguine turn of mind which you early remarked in me, has accompanied me through all the vicissitudes of health and sickness, all the quick shifting scenes of joy and sorrow, that have occupied the intervening period. I have often, as now, waited months for an interval of health and cheerfulness, to visit an absent friend, with the breathings of a mind in some degree composed and cheerful. Since I have set out so hopefully with egotism, I will e'en give you the detail of my winter's confinement, and have done with it. All my transactions, nay, my very ideas, are so blended and interwoven with the dear branches that sprout and depend from me, that you must extend the toleration of friendship beyond its usual bounds, before you can truly relish my correspondence. You must

not only indulge egotism in the first person, but you must have patience with egotism once removed, and hear me speak of my children as diffusely as I do of myself. Did I ever tell you of another *daughter* I have, who, though not born to me, is as dear and has cost me much dearer, than any of the rest? This daughter of my affection is called Charlotte Grant; she is nearly related to Mr. G.; was left motherless in her tenth year. - - - - - I have not at present, I feel I have not, spirits or resolution to go through the detail I meant. Yet if I could, it would do more than amuse, it would deeply interest and affect you. When she found a temporary home in our family, I had the pleasure to observe, that though in a great measure neglected and uncultivated, she possessed a strength of intellect, a purity of sentiment and rectitude of principle, that afforded the best foundation for the embellishments which instruction might add to the rich gifts of nature. It was evident that this disposition would richly reward the labour of any one who should by a little culture, unfold the beauties of a mind, which, though untainted with vice and undebased by folly, had been so clouded by seclusion, and so shut up by reserve, that it required some penetration to discover of what it was capable.

* * * * *

My very friends were all against me; they were sure my anxious tenderness for this amiable sufferer, and the trouble I should take about her,

would be a fresh source of painful solicitude to a mind already enfeebled with many cares. But I was resolute. Why should I renew my own sorrows, by telling you what difficulties and embarrassments attended the outset of my plan, what weeding and pruning I had to go through, and how I sacrificed every thing to the one favourite object of making this child of sorrow appear to the world that lovely and estimable object for which nature designed her. I will rather invite your gratulation, by telling you how amply my cares have been repaid, and how richly her warm gratitude, her rapid improvement, and the justice which even the selfish world now does to her distinguished merit, have recompensed me for all I have done and suffered. - - - - - She has spent the two last winters in town,* where she is very much admired and caressed. The other season she passes with us, and is as sedulous in her endeavours to share and soften the many cares incident to my large family, and bustling manner of life, as the most dutiful child could possibly be. I find her now a most pleasing and rational companion, possessed of genuine sentiment, without romantick extravagance. She joins to the open and generous spirit of youth, a depth and solidity of reflection, which is the natural result of early affliction in a strong and well principled mind. She is admired for

* *The town*—throughout the western Highlands, means Glasgow.

beauty more by others than by me. But she confessedly excels in grace and elegance. Her countenance is certainly most singularly interesting ; and her manner, her air, her figure, and her motions, have all a mingled softness and dignity peculiar to herself. My eldest daughter lives constantly with my father and mother, who are very happy in their new establishment. She shews a taste for letters, and a retentive memory. Her temper is even and placid. I have her here just now, and propose sending her to town, where I hope she will not only derive benefit from the schools she is to attend, but from the society and example of a lady of genuine worth, an old and true friend of mine, with whom she is to reside. By all that is sweet in sympathy, or sacred in friendship, I conjure you to write before your heart cools, after perusing this desultory scroll. Should my present indisposition terminate fatally, it will be the last instance of long tried love and truth. Mr. G. insists on being crowded in. Accept his regards, and believe I shall be to the last hour of recollection, yours, &c.

* * * * *

Yet could I invite you to share in the perfection of rural elegance ; could I send my carriage for you, &c. &c. with what eager importunity would I urge you ! You must allow I have been very modest on this subject ; the favour coming so entirely from your side, makes it far more pleasing to look forward to, than if I had urged you to

take a journey so fatiguing, and share accommodation so unlike what you have been used to. The consciousness of all this has made me mention my very wishes on the subject with fear and trembling. - - - - One text more, and I have done on the subject. We all know him to be the man of wisdom, but you must also allow him to be a *man of feeling*, who said, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." You gratify me beyond expression by your ideas, so different from those of the rest of the world, and so consonant to my own, regarding the views and notions with which I ought to inspire my children. On a subject which thrills through the deepest recesses of the heart, and awakens all the ardour of enthusiasm, to find in a kindred bosom the image of our own reflections and sensations, affords a pleasure like that of hearing unexpectedly the sweetest musick in perfect unison with the awakened sensibility of the moment. Soon may you see those children whom I have been endeavouring to train to the exercise of humble and patient virtue. You will see, that, like the Laplanders,

" They love their mountains, and enjoy their storms ;
 No false desires, no pride-created wants,
 Disturb the peaceful current of their time."

* * * * *

Our manner of living here is in some degree patriarchal. The large family of artless primitive people we are obliged to keep about, and the number of our children, who look up to us as the

only object of love and veneration, occasion our lives to be spent in alternate acts of power and beneficence. Now what more have kings, but trappings and pageantry ! When shall I hear of your appearing at the bar of the national assembly, to claim the rights you inherit as representative of the eldest branch of your family ? for so you seem entitled to do by their late liberal edicts. Pray has Miss Malliet caught the Gallomania ? Yet its infection spreads widely. Farewell, heartily ! as the king says.

LETTER LXXVII.

TO MRS. SMITH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Feb. 11, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM just recovering from an indisposition so severe, that it would have robbed you of a correspondent if it had continued much longer. This is a sickly season, even amidst these mountains, where the keen atmosphere is so often agitated with storms, as well as by the dashing torrents, that it seldom stagnates into impurity. This, with the temperance and exercise which wholesome poverty produces, is the reason that death confines his ravages to infancy and declining age. There are very few instances here, of people dying in early youth ; and, when they do happen,

they seem objects of general concern and speculation. Mr. G. had a relation, a young lady remarkable for nothing but singular mildness, piety, and prudence. Having been from her earliest youth subject to nervous affections, she became last winter quite emaciated and enfeebled, and at last died of a mismanaged rose fever, like my sweet Petrina. Yet every one insisted that her death was caused by grief for the loss of her brother. Another young creature, who has languished all this winter with similar complaints, is pronounced to be dying of love, though no mortal can say of whom. Thus primitive and romantic are the notions of our mountaineers. I am now to notify to you a removal, in which you will, for my sake, be interested : it is that of my father from Fort George to Glasgow, which you know was matter of doubtful speculation, but is now decided. I feel the increased distance very painfully ; yet there are many considerations, which at more leisure I will explain to you, that reconcile me to it. I have lived so long entirely for others, that self-denial becomes with me rather a habit than a virtue ; and whatever is proposed or thought of, it is not my own gratification, but the manner in which it affects the various branches of my individual self, that occurs first to me. I have likewise to inform you that Miss Ourry comes positively about the beginning of May. Glasgow is out of her way, and she will grudge every hour she is absent from us, after she enters Scotland.

She cannot stand a Highland winter, and Miss Malliet will not be happy if she does not return at the appointed time. When that comes, I shall probably accompany her to Glasgow, and see my father's family, including some of my own, settled. I hope you do not think I had the confidence to urge my friend to come to such a place, and such humble accommodation. She invited herself most cordially, and I received her proffered visit with grateful joy ; but I have most pathetically represented how like our *peat reek*, &c. are to the comforts of Quilca and Cavan, immortalized by Swift. Yet she is unalterable, and I rejoice thereat. The ancestors of this lady and her friend both left France, for conscience sake, on the repeal of the Edict of Nantz, and they have no doubt many relations there. Judge how they must be affected by the state of that unhappy country, and what their feelings must be in consequence of the last fatal catastrophe. It was but last night we heard it. News reaches us but slowly. Would you think, after being so long engrossed by domestick cares and anxieties, and drinking so lately the bitter draught of private and particular sorrow, that I should weep for a king ? I wonder at it myself ; and yet I wept abundantly, and was disturbed and agitated all night. I am still under a dead weight of sadness : the recent wound of my heart, which is but skinned over, seeks only a pretence to bleed anew. Do you feel thus ? Pray get the tragedy of Agis, and read it for my sake and that of the

French King. I remember when I was very young, and felt deep impressions from what I read, I was charmed with the choruses in that tragedy. I am as usual haunted with an apposite quotation :

When Joves decrees a nation's doom,
He calls their *worthies* to the tomb.
Fearless they fall, immortal rise,
And claim the freedom of the skies.

He fell not as the warrior falls,
Whose breast defends his native walls ;
To treason Agis bow'd his head,
And by his guilty subjects bled.

I have altered one word, to make it the better apply to the benign Louis. I have observed in the history of all nations, that when the women became impudent and licentious, and the sacred bond of marriage was made light of, that nation's downfall was near. We are very consequential beings, believe me. The purity of female manners is the basis on which, morally speaking, all the order and virtue of society are founded. Who cares for his country but in consequence of first loving the relations who attach him to it ? And who can care much for parents, brothers, and children, where relationship is dubious ? It is an abominable state of society ; even setting the great cordial of life, the hope of futurity, out of the question ! May you and I never live to see our dear country tainted with this infectious depravity ! I am, in joy and sorrow, yours unalterably.

LETTER LXXVIII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, March 20, 1793.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE been for some days tortured with a most outrageous tooth-ach. I now snatch a lucid interval, which I fear will be but a short one, to enjoy and acknowledge the lively and sincere pleasure I feel from your intimation through Charlotte, I mean of your intention of coming in June. I hope your jaunt will be favoured with good weather, and that you will see the harsh features of nature around us softened into their mildest aspect. I flatter myself novelty will make you as partial to these wild and solitary scenes, as habit has made me. You shall have one of the warmest corners both in our cottage, and in our hearts. If you come while Miss Ourry stays, each of you, I am sure, will put up with a little crowding, to share these apartments, or rather compartments, with the other. If you set out so soon as I wish, and hope, I dare say you will get the start of her, and be first in possession. She was detained in London three weeks beyond her intention, settling the affairs of an old grand-uncle. That intricate piece of business is now, I hope, satisfactorily concluded. Not hearing of her this fortnight, I take for granted she has begun her journey. By

letters from Edinburgh I find our friends there are very willing to do her the honours of the good town most completely. Their politeness, and the fatigues of the former journey, may perhaps detain her there for some days. Among the various obligations I owe to you, the interest I am told you take in this highly valued friend, is not the least. The affection that subsists between her and me is too old, and too mellow, for the little jealousies and monopolies of recent girlish attachments. It is like a deep rooted tree, which, far from requiring to be fenced or propped up, extends its shelter to younger plants around it. By loving each other so long and so well, our hearts are more fitted to pay the warm tribute of esteem to merit wherever it exists. By reciprocal sympathy, we feel as if engaged for each other in debts of gratitude and kindness. Here you have a rhapsody, a simile, and I know not what. People, at my time of day, seldom deck out common objects with the vivid hues of enthusiasm. But you have only to account for this natural curiosity, of a latter spring in the imagination, by supposing that in the tooth-ach, as in the gout, the intervals of ease are distinguished by an uncommon flow of spirits. As I take it for granted you come rather with a pious intention to hermitize and contemplate, than with any view to amusement, I shall be in no pain for the sameness that awaits you here. Being a lover of nature, and a mother, perhaps it will afford you some pleasure to see a family of

young creatures as happy as health, good nature, and perfect liberty, can make them ; who never knew what it was to form an artificial wish, or to have a natural one ungratified, unless it were for a little gilt book, whose wondrous assemblage of rare protraitures had excited their admiration. Your arrival will, I am sure, greatly revive Charlotte, who has mourned immoderately for the great loss we have all sustained in Mrs. Mac P., of R.* I am happy to hear Miss P. has recovered, and has a prospect of passing the summer so agreeably, with the worthy family at Andmore, of whom I have been taught to think very highly indeed. Mr. G. joins in every good wish towards the dwellers on the Dune, and rejoices with me at the nearer prospect of seeing the lord of the said Dune

“ Once more on the borders of the brawling brook.”

Believe me, my dear Madam, with warmest regard, &c. &c.

.....
 * Mrs. Macpherson, of Ralia, married to a near relation, an intimate friend, of the minister of Laggan. She was distinguished for beauty and understanding, and died about her thirtieth year, on the birth of her youngest son, leaving eleven children to lament her irreparable loss.

LETTER LXXIX.

TO MRS. BROWN, GLASGOW.

Laggan, July 23, 1793.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN,

IF I had not been dying all winter, and half killed with fatigue all summer, in consequence of the number of things neglected which I was unable to overtake, it would have been unpardonable in me to have been thus long silent to you, on whose friendship I set so great and just a value. Mrs. Smith says you had a sick child in your arms. This, I take for granted, was William, whom I know to be as fine a child as M— described. I think if there was any danger, she would have mentioned it more seriously. I am charmed to hear you are so well pleased with —, nor do I much wonder at it, considering that there are many *youisms* about her; though she wants that spirit of accuracy by which you were so early distinguished. She is active, lively, and has an ardent, generous disposition. This does not evaporate in profession, but labours rather to serve, than to please. For all your partiality, I still think she has many of the awkwardnesses which distinguish an unbred girl. Yet I willingly allow, it is not quite a vulgar awkwardness; for, as I formerly observed to you, where there is mind, there is always, to a certain degree, manner. Miss

Ourry and I used to call that embarrassment which results from much feeling and spirit, joined with little usage of the world, elegant awkwardness. I believe a certain portion of indifference must go towards the composition of perfect fashionable ease. You must be fully satisfied with yourself, before you can be fully convinced that every one else is satisfied with you, and the contrary idea is painful and embarrassing. I give you joy of the nephew or niece you are about to acquire. Your sister is astonished at my calling this a joyful event. No wonder, considering how I am worried and worn out with such acquisitions. Yet people here, though they should be at the utmost loss how to support their children, still continue to rejoice at every addition, and consider the loss of offspring as the greatest misfortune that can possibly befall a family. Those who live in towns and highly civilized societies, where such numberless little somethings become necessary to make up the sum total of felicity, have no idea how strong the great simple outlines of what constitutes happiness in a state of nature, are drawn on the untutored heart. Without reasoning or reflecting, such hearts find the strongest and most pleasurable emotions excited, merely by the exercise of tender and laudable affections. Strangers to false refinement, and incapable from want of cultivation, of that exalted enjoyment that arises from sentimental attachment, grounded on intellectual excellence, the ties of nature, the "charities" of life,

are the great sources of their comfort, and sweeten all their hardships. Since bad seasons, and new modes of farming, have impoverished the peasantry, I do not think there is a poor tenant in this parish, but what is in some measure supported by his children. And there is no instance of one failing in this tender retribution. Brought up with generous sentiments, but frugal and self-denying habits, they are not like the children of luxury and indulgence, whose desires go always beyond their acquisitions, and leave nothing for bounty or for gratitude. Neither are they like the groveling offspring of callous vulgarity, who are taught to glean and hoard and think for self only. I have rambled as usual. But I believe I at first meant to remark how insensibly, in course of time, we in some degree adopt the habits and prejudices of those about us, even while we pity their ignorance, and fancy ourselves more enlightened. For my part, I have learnt to rejoice at the birth of people's fifteenth child, and to listen to stories of apparitions and predictions with as much indulgence, though with less credulity, than N. B. Halhed exercises towards Brothers. For instance, t'other day, my dairy-maid, who has been above seven years in the house, and is a pious maiden, and a perfect treasury of local and traditional anecdote, told me a story, which I am going to translate literally for your behoof, and which I was forced to hear with a face of belief, for fear of being thought an infidel. I must premise that

our dairy-maids always speak very wisely to the cows, though it is only in rare instances, like this, that the cows answer them. "Yesterday fortnight, (I am sure it is very true, for I saw a man with these eyes that saw the dairy-maid,) the minister of Mouline in Athol, you know—well, his dairy-maid went into the byre, and put out all the cows but one, who lay down and would not move : 'Get up,' says the dairy-maid ; 'I won't get up,' says the cow ;—'but you shall,' replied the damsel, a little startled. 'Go to your master, and bid him come here,' says the cow. So the girl went, and her master came to the byre. 'Get up,' said he to the cow ; 'no, I won't,' said she, 'I want to speak to you.' 'Say on,' said her master, 'since you are permitted.' The cow began ; 'Expect a summer of famine, a harvest of blood, and a winter of tears.' So then the cow went about her business." Now this fine story gains ample credit, and it would be thought impiety to doubt it. Could you have believed, that there existed manners and opinions so primitive as those which are still preserved in the parish of Laggan ? Will you condemn or laugh at my singularity, when I tell you, that I am so wearied and disgusted with seeing ignorant, conceited, and irreligious coxcombs, form absurd pretensions to reason and philosophy (by affecting to despise all that Newton, Boyle, Locke, and other lights and ornaments of their species believed, and all that inspiration and piety have taught,) that I begin to think my poor

Anne's credulity more tolerable than such cold hearted skepticism? I would, at any rate, sooner listen to the sad predictions of either Achilles' horse, or the minister of Mouline's cow, than to many "dreamers of gay dreams," who imagine themselves "wit's oracles." No doubt the true line lies between credulity and skepticism; but if I quit that line, let me go where I am led by the imagination and the heart. Did you but know how very, very busy I have been all day, having twenty people at work, cutting our winter fuel in the moss, and only one servant at home to provide food for all these, with little aid, you would think my writing all this stuff, now that every body is asleep, as great an exertion as that of the minister of Mouline's cow. I bid you drowsily Adieu, for the first lark is warning me to bed, like an owl as I am.

LETTER LXXX.

TO MISS OURRY.

Glasgow, Jan. 2, 1794.

I AM far from imputing neglect to you after your two spirited efforts from F——bridge and London, and the other very pleasing testimonies of attention to my dear friends at Laggan, of which I heard as they passed through the town.

After this elegant exordium, with which you must be greatly edified, it remains with me to account for staying so long here, contrary to my mate's tender injunction and your entreaties. First, then, my father has been very ill, and had I been much inclined, which I honestly confess was not the case, I could not, till now, have thought of returning. Then I have not put B. to school, or done half what I meant. I have seen Mary Woolstonecroft's book, which is so run after here, that there is no keeping it long enough to read it leisurely, though one had leisure. It has produced no other conviction in my mind, but that of the author's possessing considerable abilities, and greatly misapplying them. To refute her arguments would be to write another and a larger book; for there is more pains and skill required to refute ill-founded assertions, than to make them. Nothing can be more specious and plausible, for nothing can delight Misses more than to tell them they are as wise as their masters. Though, after all, they will in every emergency be like Trinculo in the storm, when he crept under Caliban's gaberdine for shelter. I consider this work as every way dangerous. First, because the author to considerable powers adds feeling, and I dare say a degree of rectitude of intention. She speaks from conviction on her own part, and has completely imposed on herself before she attempts to mislead you. Then because she speaks in such a strain of seeming piety, and quotes Scripture in a man-

ner so applicable and emphatick, that you are thrown off your guard, and surprised into partial acquiescence, before you observe that the deduction to be drawn from her position, is in direct contradiction, not only to Scripture, reason, the common sense and universal custom of the world, but even to parts of her own system, and many of her own assertions. Some women of a good capacity, with the advantage of superior education, have no doubt acted and reasoned more consequentially and judiciously than some weak men; but, take the whole sex through, this seldom happens; and were the principal departments, where strong thinking and acting become necessary, allotted to females, it would evidently happen so much the more rarely, that there would be little room for triumph, and less for inverting the common order of things, to give room for the exercise of female intellect. It sometimes happens, especially in our climate, that a gloomy, dismal winter day, when all without and within is comfortless, is succeeded by a beautiful starlight evening, embellished with aurora borealis, as quick, as splendid, and as transient, as the play of the brightest female imagination: of these bad days succeeded by good nights, there may, perhaps, be a dozen in the season. What should we think of a projector, that, to enjoy the benefit of the one, and avoid the oppression of the other, should insist that people should sleep all day and work all night, the whole year round? I think the great

advantage that women, taken upon the whole, have over men, is, that they are more gentle, benevolent, and virtuous. Much of this only superiority they owe to living secure and protected in the shade. Let them loose, to go impudently through all the justling paths of politicks and business, and they will encounter all the corruptions that men are subject to, without the same powers either of resistance or recovery: for, the delicacy of the female mind is like other fine things; in attempting to rub out a stain, you destroy the texture. I am sorry to tell you, *in a very low whisper*, that this intellectual equality that the Misses make such a rout about, has no real existence. The ladies of talents would not feel so overburdened, and at a loss what to do with them, if they were not quite out of the common course of things. Mary W. and some others put me in mind of a kitten we had last winter, who, finding a small tea-pot without a lid, put in its head, but not finding it so easy to take it out again, she broke the pot in the struggle; her head however, still remained in the opening, and she retained as much of the broken utensil round her neck, as made a kind of moveable pillory. She ran about the house in alarm and astonishment. She did not know what was the matter; felt she was not like other cats, but had acquired a greater power of making disturbance, which she was resolved to use to the very utmost, and so would neither be quiet herself, or suffer any one else to

remain so. I leave the application to you. Our powers are extremely well adapted to the purposes for which they are intended ; and if now and then faculties of a superior order are bestowed upon us, they too are, no doubt, given for good and wise purposes, and we have as good a right to use them as a linnet has to sing ; but this so seldom happens, and it is of so little consequence whether it happens or not, that there is no reason why Scripture, custom, and nature, should be set at defiance, to erect up a system of education for qualifying women to act parts which Providence has not assigned to the sex. Where a woman has those superior powers of mind to which we give the name of genius, she will exert them under all disadvantages : Jean Jacques says truly, genius will educate itself, and, like flame, burst through all obstructions. Certainly in the present state of society, when knowledge is so very attainable, a strong and vigorous intellect may soon find its level. Creating hot-beds for female genius, is merely another way of forcing exotick productions, which, after all, are mere luxuries, indifferent in their kind, and cost more time and expense than they are worth. As to superiority of mental powers, Mrs. W. is doubtless the empress of female philosophers ; yet what has she done for philosophy, or for the sex, but closed a ditch, to open a gulf ? There is a degree of boldness in her conceptions, and masculine energy in her style, that is very imposing. There is a gloomy grandeur

in her imagination, while she explores the regions of intellect without chart or compass, which gives one the idea of genius wandering through chaos. Yet her continual self-contradiction, and quoting, with such seeming reverence, that very Scripture, one of whose first and clearest principles it is the avowed object of her work to controvert; her considering religion as an adjunct to virtue, so far and no farther than suits her hypothesis; the taking up and laying down of revelation with the same facility; make me think of a line in an old song,

“ One foot on sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.”

What, as I said before, has she done? shewed us all the miseries of our condition; robbed us of the only sure remedy for the evils of life, the sure hope of a blessed immortality; and left for our comfort the rudiments of crude, unfinished systems, that crumble to nothing whenever you begin to examine the materials of which they are constructed. Come, let us for a moment shut the Bible, and listen to Mary. Let us suppose intellect equally divided between the sexes. We may deceive the understanding, but it would be a very bold effort of sophistry to attempt to impose on the senses. We know too well that our imaginations are more awake, our senses more acute, our feelings more delicate, than those of our *tyrants*. Say, then, we are otherwise equal. These qualities or defects would still leave the advantage on

their side ; we should much oftener resolve and act, before we called reason to counsel, than they would. Besides, I foresee that the balance will go in the old fashioned way at last, if Mary carries her point. When the desired revolution is brought about, will not the most sanguine advocates of equality be satisfied, in the first national council, with having an equal number of each sex elected ? Now I foresee that when this is done, (as girls, or very old women, will not be eligible for the duties of legislation, and mothers have certainly a greater stake in the commonwealth) a third of the female members will be lying-in, recovering, or nursing ; for you can never admit the idea of a female philosopher giving her child to be nursed. Whatever other changes may be found proper, I hope they will retain the wool-sacks in the upper house, and add some more. The membresses of course will bring their infants into the house ; this will interrupt no debate ; for children that suck in philosophy with their milk, will not cry like the vulgar brats under the old regime, but they may possibly sleep during a long debate and then the wool-sacks will be very convenient to lay them upon. There is no end either of reasoning or ridicule on this truly ridiculous subject. If the powers of a very superior female mind prove so inadequate to its own purposes, when thus absurdly exerted, what will become of those who adopt her vanity and skepticism, without her knowledge and genius to support them ?

To conclude ; I see 'tis a great custom now for people to dabble in skepticism and speculative impiety, keeping all the while a slight hold of their original principles, that they may return when they please, as if *thus far and no farther* belonged to finite natures. Yet these same people would be very unhappy, if they saw their young children going out of their depth into a current trusting to a slight hold of a twig on the brink ; though the worst that could happen in this latter case were only drowning. In fact, the Bible is or is not the charter of our salvation. It is necessary, both for our peace of mind and consistency of conduct, that we should either believe or not believe it. The nature of the subject admits no wavering ; it is all true, or all false. Let us then seriously regard the most important object that can ever be presented to our view. These truths must be either wedded or renounced. If we mingle daring innovations and unwarranted practices with a feeble and dubious belief, haunted with pungent remorse or gloomy uncertainty, we shall not even enjoy the fleeting day that is passing from us. Let us then grasp hard our principles, or let them go. As the reformers manage, they have the fears without the hopes that religion inspires. Let us at any rate, in these important concerns, be guided by the common sense that directs us in ordinary bargains. Let us examine well what we are to get, before we part with what we have. My poor brains could never support

the rotation of opinions which seems to delight some people here. They remind me of Hotspur, when he talks of living in a windmill. What a pleasing transition I am about to make from those who believe too little, to those who believe rather too much. With what delight and reverence I shall listen to dear Moome's *awe compelling tales*, after all this farrago. Adieu ! may you reap the fruits of steady principle and consistent conduct, both here and hereafter. Farewell, kindly.

LETTER LXXXI.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, July 2, 1794.

DEAR MADAM,

WE begin now to be very impatient for the confirmation of the glad tidings of your coming north. It was wrong to mention it unless you mean to carry it through ; the prospect having so much elated the young family. B. is particularly so ; even her meek spirit is occupied in premeditating chicken slaughter, for the poultry are in her department ; and then she is so engrossed with considering what fruits and vegetables will be in season. My principal fear is, that our stock of good weather will be exhausted before you arrive ; for, as the man says of his Italian wash

balls, we have really had Italian sunshine for six weeks past, which, with the addition of tranquillity, and an easy, regular progression of family and farming, has been a great source of enjoyment to us : so that, were it not for the French and the caterpillars, we should be quite happy ; but the former disturb our peace, and the latter destroy our goosberries. I should not speak plurally, for my sovereign is not so much the sport of petty contingencies. You see thus, in the midst of innocent pleasures and laudable employments, I remain a perturbed example of that great moral truth, that there is no unmixed felicity here ;—at least out of Plymouth, for there the orb of joy shines round and bright in the beatified dwelling of Capt. F—r and his mate, without being obscured by clouds, or waning into diminution. In short, Mrs. F. seems highly pleased with the change of state, and delighted with the character of her mate. No wonder, if he be all she thinks ; and I do not doubt of her judgment or veracity in this or any other instance. Such mildness of disposition, rectitude of principle, and singular delicacy of sentiment, as she ascribes to him, must enchant a person of her taste and feeling. The porch, like our own, is often the most decorated and pleasant part of the dwelling ; yet I flatter myself, my dear friend's case will not confirm this observation, but that she will find herself just as happy at the close of this century. Her great fear at present is, that her lord should be called

out to Channel service. But I hope, now that Lord Howe has so completely established our superiority there, it will no longer be accounted a post of danger. You never tell me a word about your son John, which you ought to do, in common charity, to afford me a pretext for saying something about mine. When did you hear from him, from St. Helena?—I have used all means to get Charlotte home for near a month past, and am now like to succeed.

* * * * *

I see Robespierre too, has been lately the object of a young lady's enthusiasm. I hope he will meet some enthusiast soon, who will send him on a journey he is little prepared for. Mr. G. is still ideal chaplain, for the choice is not declared; but we think the same appointment in an old regiment would be better. With kind love to you all, in which the pastor joins,

I am very gratefully yours.

LETTER LXXXII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

August 30, 1794.

MY DEAR MADAM,

THOUGH I had not received your letter, inclination would prompt me to write to you with-

out the stimulus of having any thing important to say ; but if you expect me to be punctual, you must give ample license for dulness and absurdity, besides a full allowance to my happy talent of digression, my rare felicity in parenthesis, and my peculiar knack at circumlocution. Do not let the solemnity of my parting with you too deeply impress you. It was merely the effect of a momentary impulse, which I could not control. I am sorry it saddened so much of your journey. I too consumed the time at home in sympathetick dejection ; for the impression did not wear off so soon as these gusts of tenderness and melancholy generally do. The acuteness of my feelings, and the horror with which I shrink from the evils of life, are but short-lived in my mind, by a happy facility in rousing up images of joy and comfort, and catching at the bright side of every object, and every prospect. To a projector or adventurer, this might prove a dangerous faculty ; but to one whose fate it is to walk peaceably (though sometimes pensively) through the obscure by-paths of life, it is an advantage to have a quickness in discovering every violet that springs up among brambles, and every rainbow that smiles through the tears of the sky. I think the soft melancholy produced in your mind by the musick of your Irish piper, would have a sweet accordance with the sensations which those "sympathetick glooms" about Dunkeld are so well fitted to inspire. I, for my part, though a stranger to the art of musick,

am well acquainted with its power, and subject to its influence, in its rudest forms ; particularly when it breathes the spirit of that sentiment which, for the time, predominates in my mind, or wakes some tender remembrance with which accident has connected it. When my dearest little boy was in the last stage of that illness which proved fatal to him, we had three maids who had all good voices ; one was afraid to sit up alone to attend my calls, on which the nurse-maid agreed to sit with her, and lull the infant beside her. The solitary maid was then afraid to stay alone in her attick abode. The result was, that the three Syrens sung in concert, a great part of the night, which seemed to soothe the dear sufferer so much, that when they ceased, he often desired they would begin again. He listened to it three hours before he expired. I never hear the most imperfect note of *Cro Challin** since, without feeling my heart-strings accord with it :

“ It gives a very echo from the seat,
Where grief is throned :”

and were I to hear those moving sounds, which we are told

“ Drew iron tears down Pluto cheek,”

they could not open every source of anguish more effectually. You have it now in your power to taste the pathos of musick in its full extent. Mr.

.....

* *Cro Challin* is a sweet and very popular strain of pastoral, invariably sung in every highland fold.

Balfour, I am told, has unrivalled power in doing justice to our old plaintive melodies. We were consoled for your short stay by knowing you found his family at Dunchattan. - - - - - Charlotte is, and looks much better than when you saw her. This has been a day of joyful quiet to her, and no less joyful bustle to every one else. The servants, tenants, and *bairns* are all busy making our great haystack ; *Jock* and the men drive carts ; the rest trample down the top ; and the two little ones are handed back and forward, or driven up and down in the carts, to their great delectation. Being Saturday, the stack must needs be closed to-night ; so they have no time to come down to dress dinner ; but a cold collation has been conveyed to the top of the stack with great glee, and devoured with alacrity. This is what I account one of the pleasures of a country life, to see so many people usefully busy, and innocently happy.

* * * * *

Mr. Grant rejoiced to hear the 90th regiment belonged to so good a man as Balgowan.* He is much better of late, not at all the worse perhaps for being chaplain. - - - Robespierre's fall has had all deserved aggravations. Imagination shrinks from the images that such a death sug-

.....

* Colonel Graham of Balgowan possesses a great landed property in Perthshire ; and represents one of the most ancient and considerable families in Scotland. For his taste, his talents, his courage, and his virtues, he is justly considered as one of the greatest ornaments of his country.

gests. Of whom was it said that "Hell grew darker at his frown?" I wonder if the modern philanthropists, whose affections comprehend all, but those who might be the better for them; I wonder, I say, if they have found out a cool place for this minister of vengeance, or wrapped him in a corner of the wide mantle of everlasting sleep.

Adieu, tenderly.

LETTER LXXXIII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Sept. 21, 1794.

DEAR MADAM,

MY last was to Mr. M. Since then, indolence and indisposition have induced me to seize the pretext of not hearing from you, as an excuse to delay writing. My better judgment however tells me I have no right to be ceremonious with you; and past experience convinces me, that writing easily and fully to a real friend, will exhilarate my spirits, if once I could whip myself up to it. I have been just discharging a painful task of duty; it is that of writing a long monitory epistle to poor M—y, whom I have a long while unpardonably neglected. I know she is cherished with the tenderest care, and has the advantage of having her moral and religious duties inculcated in the most forcible manner.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Did I tell you what pleasure it gave me to find your friend and favourite Dr. Maclean had given up that wild scheme of going to America? I was fond of that country to enthusiasm, and spent the most delightful and fanciful period of my life in it; for mine was a very premature childhood. The place where I resided was the most desirable in the whole continent; there my first perceptions of pleasure, and there my earliest habits of thinking, were formed; and from thence I drew that high relish for the sublime simplicity of nature which has ever accompanied me. This has been the means of preserving a certain humble dignity in all the difficulties I have had to struggle through. Yet, from what I know of the alterations which the last twenty years have brought about in that country, and the still greater difference which other views and associations have made on myself, though I had it now in my power to return, my judgment would check my inclination. The paths that lead from nature and simplicity, towards elegance and false refinement in manners, and artificial modes of living, do not indeed tend to happiness, but they slope with our inclinations, and wind with our caprices; though, when too far pursued, they lead directly to selfishness and depravity. These paths can never be retrodden. When tired of the idle and frivolous bustle, and the vain empty pursuits, that fill up (I can scarce

say diversify) fashionable life, we languish under the burden of ceremony. The multiplied elegancies and conveniences, the various and mixed society which at first delighted, begin now to encumber us. Those pleasures lose the force of novelty, and our riper judgment undervalues what we once thought essential to felicity. We now retrace our first and purest ideas of happiness ; the rural ease that dwells in the pastoral valley ; the soothing quiet and artless innocence of the cottage ; the solemn gloom of the forest, in which we wish to meditate undisturbed ; and the sublime solitude of the mountain, from whose elevation we wish to look down on low pursuits, and give a kind of repose to the wearied mind. We forget that nature presents us with no unmixed cup of enjoyment. Habituated to the profusion of art, which accumulates pleasures till they grow vapid and tasteless, we do not easily reconcile ourselves to the parsimony of nature, which preserves its relish by a frugal distribution. We endeavour to return to those habits which long distant recollection has endeared, which poetical description has decked with beauties innumerable, but which are incapable of being combined and enjoyed together. Estranged from nature, enervated by luxury, and softened by false delicacy, we set about the experiment ; we find the cottage quiet indeed, but smoky, confined, and deficient in a thousand things on which we are become too dependent. The narrow bounds imprison us, the

low roof crushes, and scanty light which struggles in through the little casement, bewilders us. The inhabitants we find innocent, hospitable, and willing to please ; but we are shocked with their vulgar language, disgusted with their uncouth manners, and tired with the sameness to which their narrow circle of ideas confines their conversation ; and we are unable either to descend to their topicks, or bring them up to ours ; we find dull uniformity and listless languor in the valley, whose culture does not employ, and whose produce does not enrich us. The forest walks are damp and intricate, and its gloom melancholy and oppressive to us, who have not accustomed ourselves to reflect, but to observe and to find continual employment for that faculty among the busy haunts of men. In vain we climb the mountain in search of more extended prospects, and more exalted serenity : fatigue follows, and chagrin overtakes us ; the wind pierces, and the cold benumbs us ; the prospects are perhaps obscured by mist, or lost in dim confusion, and we hasten back weary and unsatisfied, from scenes that expand the soul, and tranquillize the spirit of that faithful lover of nature, who has never quitted her bosom for artificial joys, or wandered in the vain search of happiness not meant for this threshold of existence. It is indeed a singular effort of a vigorous superior mind, to preserve through life the love of artless manners and cheap pleasures. Your unequalled steadiness in this respect, is one

of the strongest ties that hold me to you. Do not call this flattery. I cannot even flatter you so far as to say, that the disquisition I have just wandered into was meant for your amusement. Truly, I have amused myself by unburdening my mind, and arranging my ideas. If you too are amused, I shall not be sorry ; and if, on the contrary, you are wearied, I shall not be angry. I have had your letter, and Mr. M.'s : more of them anon. I am glad that Charlotte thinks I look so well ; I do not think so myself. Languor and thoughtfulness grow upon me, and I become less able and willing to take exercise. I rather think I resemble grandmother Eve, of whom we are told that,

“ So much of death her thoughts had entertained,
As died her cheek with pale.”

Yet you must not think me vapourish. That change in the mode of our existence which is before us all, has become familiar to my mind from frequent perils. I can bear to look at it, and wish not to be surprised by it. I am not so ignorant of the nature and importance of preparation for futurity, as to wear myself out in fervours of forced devotion, during this short period of suspended fear and expectation, in hopes of blotting out the errors of a negligent and self-gratifying life, by the feeble struggles produced, not by rational and vital piety, but mere selfish terror. I endeavour to repose my hopes on a nobler and surer foundation. The dim and tremulous light that comes in short glimpses to my mind, beams forth from

merits far transcending what human duties can pretend to, or human efforts arrive at. I do not think I have a worse chance for passing through the approaching crisis, than any other person, worn out by many similiar risks. And, if it be the Divine will to perserve me amidst my family, how will it lessen my after usefulness or enjoyment, by the having endeavoured to resign my mind to what must inevitably happen at some future period?—I am glad you were so pleased with the nymph of the Fountain, whom I have endeavoured to recommend to your attention, by making her both a Highlander and a moralist. Those light excursions of fancy, where

“Soft description holds the place of sense,”
are merely the relaxation and play of the mind. Were I to dilate my awakened powers towards greater objects, and give vent to my feelings on subjects still more serious and impressive, where there is abundant scope for pathetick painting, among the sad realities of life, I should require to be more self-possessed, and freed from the pressure of the present exigencies. But that time may come. I can only add that

I am always yours.

LETTER LXXXIV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

*Laggan, Monday morn, 2 o'clock,
Oct. 17, 1794.*

DEAR MADAM,

I HAD the pleasure of your letter, and you may judge of my willingness to answer it, by my sitting up the past night to watch the dawn of Monday morn, that I might write without infringing on a better day. Don't smile ; 'tis not superstition, but self-distrust ; I make resolutions, and try to hold them inviolable. I should be satisfied with your good will, but would fain preserve a *deference* for myself. On this past day, the most solemn ordinance of religion* has been celebrated here. Many of the congregation live at such distances, and the service continues so long without interval, that we find it proper to bring down a good many people to a slight refreshment through the day. The assisting clergy sleep here, and three other visitors ; so you may judge what bustle and fatigue all this must occasion to me, and how unfit I am to write ; but you will make all allowances. I am very glad that same visit is over ; and, though I have the very best opinion of the heart and understanding of your visitor, 'tis

.....

* The administration of the Sacrament.

perhaps as well the affair is over ; for, I suppose we shall hear no more of it. I felt exceedingly for the person in question. Yet we must consider how very particular her situation is, and how very dangerous it would be for her to incur the imputation of even a pardonable deviation from strict prudence. I startle at the thought of her being led to favour any thing so vague at present, and which might prove dangerous in future. She has too much good sense, and too much dependance on those whose faithful friendship she has experienced, to form any connexion, (for what less is a correspondence) with any one in a precarious situation, who might incur blame on her account. Of this person's delicacy of sentiment I have not the smallest doubt ; but that very delicacy, youth, and natural shyness, preclude him from that knowledge of the world, and, perhaps, of exact propriety, that would render the consequences which might result to her, obvious to his view. People of the character I suppose him to possess, are more likely to conciliate esteem and respect, in the sphere of their particular acquaintance, than to push their way through a hard unfeeling world. - - - - - Will you also tell Charlotte I shall write to her very soon, and inform her of many particulars which, I know, she would wish to be acquainted with. I wrote her a long melancholy letter, with the narrative of dear Petrina's loss, and all my distresses, which wore me out so, that I left off abruptly. I told her,

however, how much I was satisfied with all she did. Tell her * * * has been talking very loud all the time I write ; so you may be thankful you have escaped his incoherences. I have a profusion of complimentary messages to send you, but intreat you will imagine them. Adieu, dear Madam ! I am, in all humours, and at all times, much yours.

LETTER LXXXV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Dec. 20, 1794.

DEAR MADAM,

ANGUS MACKAY comes so sudden, and stays so short a time, that I have barely time to acknowledge your two last favours. Your attention in the writing way, in this time of need, is very considerate ; it gives a necessary fillip to the drooping spirits, to know that one is of consequence enough to be pitied and remembered by one's absent friends ; and there is no one living more conscious of the efficacy of such a cordial. I shall not attempt to answer your letters in detail, being scarce able to answer them at all. All this day I am much indisposed, but am so used to these preparatory alarms, that I am not alarmed at them. - - - - - There is nothing more

natural than for a parent to be vain of the real or imputed excellencies of children. Yet, with me, much reflection, and some observation, have so far conquered that propensity, that I am not sure whether I should not be sorry to discover those tendencies to genius that some image to exist. Distinguished abilities are attended, especially in the *undistinguished sex*, with much risk, and much envy. Second rate talents, again, afford a pretence for imaginary superiority, which flatters and intoxicates the mind more than what is real. In fact, I think pretenders are far more liable to self opinion and affectation, than minds of a truly superior order. * * * has reflection, taste, and an excellent memory, but has neither energy of mind, nor sprightliness of fancy, for any great effort of intellect. Whatever capacity she may possess, I have the comfort of knowing she will never use it invidiously or ostentatiously. Now that I am forced on thinking back on what I have done, and forward to the probable consequences, amidst the regrets I feel at not having it in my power, through constant hurry, occasional depression, and perhaps, negligence, to bring my children as forward as some others, in diligence, exactness, &c. amidst these regrets, I say, I feel a ray of comfort in retracing the unwearied pains I have taken in the cultivation of their hearts; and impressing upon them such just notions of the dispensations of Providence, and of their own peculiar state, as prevents their looking down on any one with contempt; while

the same regulated views make them regard their superiors with a respect free from envy or servility. In short, I have laboured, I flatter myself not in vain, without having often recourse to formal precepts, to make my children love virtue, and despise and detest every instance of meanness and malignity. I have so far felt the advantage of this culture, that, whatever childish faults they may commit, covetousness, envy, or strife have not, as yet, been known amongst them; and they live united by a bond of the most disinterested affection. Forgive this, and consider it merely as a soliloquy, with which I am comforting myself, when I feel much need of all earthly comforts, to go no higher. It would be both ungrateful and unjust to quit this subject of my children and my comforts, without owning, that I have great reason to account our joint charge Charlotte one of the chief of them; and should this be the last letter I ever write, I will not close it without making it a faint memorial of her faithful friendship, ardent gratitude, inflexible integrity, unexampled tenderness, and diligence of attention to all my cares and infirmities; of a character, in short, which every day rises, even upon me, who know her so intimately, and breaks, with double lustre, through the gloom of adversity. I meant to say very little, yet I have said too much. I depend on your indulgence, and shall be, while I live, with the purest truth of affection,

Yours most sincerely.

LETTER LXXXVI.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

March, 1795.

DEAR MADAM,

YESTERDAY, and not till then, I received your letter with the account of poor George's departure; which, as far as the change affected himself, was, I am sure, matter of gratulation. Well might he say with the patriarch, that, "few and evil had been the days of his pilgrimage." Doubtless, from the felicity of that new state of being, which, through the Divine mercy, he has now attained, he looks back on his past sufferings, as we do on a dream of misery that disturbed our sickly slumbers, when we awake to peace and comfort.

I do not wonder you should feel the pang of separation very severely, in spite of all that reason offers to reconcile you to the stroke. However eagerly we may grasp at delusive pleasures, we have but to examine our own undepraved feelings, to be convinced, that even the most painful exertions, arising from a virtuous sentiment, afford a secret, unspeakable enjoyment. Even the sadly-pleasing recollection of friends long since mingled with the dust, is endeared to us by the worth that sweetens their remembrance; though the thought of them opens afresh the wounds that time has closed, yet we love to indulge it.

* * * * *

When such are removed from us, we follow them with regret, though certain of their happiness. No doubt we feel a sad vacuity in our hearts ; yet I believe we miss full as much the innate consciousness of exercising a benevolence so exalted, so utterly disinterested. Your merit of this kind has been great and exemplary ; yet not unprecedented or singular. Cynick philosophers delight to represent all our views as terminating in Self. Yet, without having recourse to the annals of heroism, the domestick history of families affords so many instances of the virtue which I have been so long describing, and you so long practising, as may serve to overturn their frozen system. I understand too well the self-reproach you feel at what you think omissions in duty. My maternal tenderness was never put to so long, and so severe a trial ; yet a consciousness of a failure in duty to a beloved and lamented child, will wring my heart, and oppress my mind, as long as I can feel, or remember.

LETTER LXXXVII.

TO MRS. F—R.
(Formerly MISS OURRY.)

Laggan, April 11, 1795.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

I HAD your kind welcome letter from Goodamere in course ; and you would think your attention well bestowed, if you were present invisible, to see the joy and pride of the whole family derived from your remembrance. I am charmed to find the oblivious matrimonial gulf has not swallowed up the image of your old unaltered friend. After ascribing abundant merit to you, I begin to take a little to myself for holding, so long, a place in such a heart. Mr. Grant observes, that I have told every one that comes to the house the wonder of your being as punctual since marriage, as before. Your description of the present state of matters on the quarter-deck, is very striking and impressive indeed. It requires much worth and wisdom to act the concluding scene decently, when there are no tender connexions to keep the heart warm and open.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Your accounts of — and — have made me very thoughtful, and very thankful. Those who must needs tug through difficulties, such as I

have always been environed with, are very apt to think, whatever face they put on the matter, that there is but one impediment to their felicity. Blest with comforts which wealth cannot purchase, they think the means of procuring some convenient elegancies, and extending their charity and hospitality a little, would make them completely happy. Even the gay social winter I spent in town was a most forcible lesson of instruction to me, in this respect ; all the friends I most value, except Lady Clan,* who is wise enough to neglect forms, and live as she pleases, are slaves to the world, and to a world they contemn, and have been long disgusted with. For some reason or other, of form, of policy, or convenience, elegant leisure, the nurse of fancy and of friendship, is sacrificed ; life seems to glide from them like a dream, in pursuits which their reason despises, and among people against whom their hearts are closed up.

“ O why, since life can little more supply
Than just to look about us, and to die,”

should the few among us who understand its value, squander it so lavishly, and leave so little for active benevolence, social comfort, or elegant pleasures ; beside the great object of endeavouring to qualify ourselves for that exalted society, to which we aspire in an hereafter, divided as we are from that hereafter by so slight a barrier. Do

.....
* Lady Clan, i. e. the Lady of Clan.—Clan was a favourite appellation given to Mr. Macintosh by his intimates, on account of his Highland enthusiasm.

not think I am preaching like a cynick from my tub, either. Though I endeavour to be satisfied with the station allotted me, and feel I have many blessings which are withheld from those who have more visible sources of enjoyment ; yet I do not deny that I feel the privation of some for which I have a keen relish : elegant society, for instance, after which I should languish, were I at leisure to languish for any thing. But my consolation is, that my time is passed usefully ; I enjoy the peace and quiet of the evening exceedingly, when my hour of leisure is sweetened by reflecting, that I have all day been doing some service, or procuring some pleasure for those I dearly love. Even the unvaried self-same circle I move in, though confined and obscure, is interesting, because every thing in it connects with those branches of myself, in which I live and feel. I have no room for *tedium* ; my occupations so crowd upon me, that I find every day too short for its allotted task. Thank God, my tasks of every kind are grown much lighter ; my daughters are becoming assistants, and companions to me ; the younger are now no trouble, this blessed sewing school is such a relief. Their improvement is inconceivable - - - - - So much for egotism once removed. After all the sacrifices you have made, methinks it would be a very meritorious one, could you bring yourself to stay with your infirm — who has so little comfort, while your beloved is destined to wander on the ocean. There,

for your comfort, he may now wander in security, and have little to do but sing "Rule Britannia." These vile French seem destined to do all their mischief on one element; like our witches, who, when in pursuit of a devoted object of vengeance, dare not cross a running water, that being a boundary by the laws of magick irremovable; a very comfortable regulation this for good nautical Christians. I know you have a strong plea against what I hinted to you about your ——. You answer as the man did, who, being invited to some high party of pleasure, said, he had spent three quarters of his constitution for his friends, and was resolved to keep the fourth for himself. You have certainly been rather too long acting the part of Noah's dove, and I don't greatly wonder that you should not wish to return a second time to the ark. It is rather hard that you should have been so long the victim of caprice, and such successive and oddly varied caprice; all the worse, that the inflictors were people you loved, and who loved you as far as they were capable of loving any body; and meaning, forsooth, no harm. Yet daily experience will convince you of, what I have often told you, the state of a woman living alone.

This fatal war must of necessity end soon; it seems indeed drawing fast to a conclusion. Then you may hope for halcyon days, in the bosom of affection and tranquillity, with your best friend, whom I truly love for deserving you so well. It is indeed time your storm-beaten vessel should

come into port ; but as this interim will be a period of disquiet and anxiety at any rate, what you cannot give to comfort, you may even give to virtue and self-denial, as you have done so great a portion of the time past.

..... Heartless beings ! I have no patience to think of them. I *do* love old prejudices, especially those which affinity and affection have entwined with the heart-strings. Innovation disconcerts us ; new lights blind us ; we detest the Rights of Man, and abominate those of Woman. Think then how I am prepared to receive your friend H. M. W.'s* new publication ; though I admire her style, and confess that nobody embellishes absurdity more ingeniously. I am greatly inclined too to respect the purity of her religious principles. Yet when I think of the associates with whom her political bigotry has connected her, I think I hear the Syrian leper entreating the prophet's permission to bow a little occasionally in the house of their god Rimmon. Do you know your pupil's French is approved, and she is said to translate with purity and elegance. She passes this summer at home ; great part of which I mean to devote to the task of forming a mind, that appears to me possessed of solidity and stamina, which make it capable of culture, and worth the pains. Accept a thousand

.....

* Helen Maria Williams, before she forsook her country or her principles.

compliments, delivered in various forms ; but you must be content with the aggregate. I have not room for a literary curiosity, composed for your sole emolument. 'Tis an epistle in French, which will go under the next cover. Farewell, cordially.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

TO MRS. F—R, PLYMOUTH.

Laggan, Aug. 15, 1795.

DO you know that, by Mrs. M—'s friendly interference, J. L.* is an ensign ; not that we by any means intend him for the army. He will have leave to recruit, friends will recruit for him, and his education will proceed in the meantime. This is a fencible regiment, and will, I trust, be sent to graze before he is fit to kill or be killed. About ten days since we made a great haystack, which brought you very fresh to memory, as treading on it last year, in the fulness of rural glee. Now, before I tell my sad story, I must inform you that, while the rest of Scotland, and England's own self, were pinched with scarcity, we had last year, in this corner, the best crop ever remembered, and this year's is at least equal.

.....

* John Lowehlan Grant, the Author's eldest son.

Judge of our distress, when, after driving a cart all day, John was brought in bleeding and torn, in consequence of Paddy's being startled, and going off with the cart. - - - - - He behaved like a hero, and comforted his sisters; but you never saw a family so distressed. The muscles and sinews, I trust, are not materially injured. He will not, I hope, be lame. - - - - -
 - - - - - The spirit and manliness he has shewn in this exigence have greatly endeared him to us.
 - - - - -

Give a little of your time to such another history. This employment of time will answer many good purposes. While it steals us a while from wearing cares and trivial occupations, it will perform a half miracle, it will recal the fleeting phantom, Youth; arrest the worst effects of time's silent progress. Yes, it will preserve the kindly propensities and tender confidence that are scattered fresh and sweet, like early dew in the delightful morning of life. Yet a while we may thus preserve the sunshine of the breast, and repel the unkindly frosts of cold suspicion and distrust, and the bleak sharp blasts of caprice and peevishness,

“That make lov'd life unlovely,”
 and force the callous and the crafty to say at last.

“The yellow leaf,
 And that which should accompany old age,
 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
 I must not look to have.”

* * * * *

I grasp with avidity, the wish, the hope you express of our meeting once more. It were indeed a consummation devoutly to be wished, and I have seen too many strange things to despair of this. I think with you that I should love your husband; so much probity and tranquillity of temper would suit me, who detest art and finesse in all its shapes, and sicken at restless turbulent people, who are for ever in a bustle about they know not what. I do love a little constitutional philosophy.

Farewell, dear friend,

LETTER LXXXIX.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Feb. 20, 1796.

“WHY dost thou build the tower, son of the winged days? * Soon wilt thou depart with thy fathers. The blast from the desert shall rush through thy hall, and sound upon thy bossy shield,” &c. &c. Do you recollect, dear Madam, when I stopped with you at the gate of B—e, I repeated those lines, and observed what a suitable inscription they might prove for the front of poor James’s new house. It would appear I was moved by a

.....

* The subject of this letter was a celebrated and well known translator of ancient Scottish poetry.

prophetick impulse, when I predicted that he never would see it finished. Friday last, C. V. R. dined there. James had been indisposed since the great storm, yet received his guests with much kindness, seeming, however, languid and dispirited. Towards evening he sunk much, and retired early. Next morning he appeared, but did not eat, and looked ill. R. begged he would frank a cover for Charlotte ; he did so, and never more held a pen. When they left the house he was taken extremely ill, unable to move or receive nourishment, though perfectly sensible. Before this attack, finding some inward symptoms of his approaching dissolution, he sent for a consultation, the result of which arrived the day after his confinement. He was perfectly sensible and collected, yet refused to take any thing prescribed to him to the last, and that on this principle, that his time was come, and it did not avail. He felt the approaches of death, and hoped no relief from medicine, though his life was not such, as one should like to look back on at that awful period. Indeed whose is ? It pleased the Almighty to render his last scene most affecting and exemplary. He died last Tuesday evening ; and, from the minute he was confined till a very little before he expired, never ceased imploring the divine mercy in the most earnest and pathetick manner. People about him were overawed and melted by the fervour and bitterness of his penitence. He frequently and earnestly en-

treated the prayers of good serious people of the lower class who were admitted. He was a very good natured man ; and now that he had got all his schemes of interest and ambition fulfilled, he seemed to reflect and grow domestick, and shew'd of late a great inclination to be an indulgent landlord, and very liberal to the poor ; of which I could relate various instances, more tender and interesting than flashy or ostentatious. His heart and temper were originally good. His religious principles were, I fear, unfixed and fluctuating ; but the primary cause that so much genius, taste, benevolence, and prosperity, did not produce or diffuse more happiness, was his living a stranger to the comforts of domestick life, from which unhappy connexions excluded him. Tavern company, and bachelor circles, make men gross, callous, and awkward ; in short, disqualify them for superior female society. The more heart old bachelors of this class have, the more absurd and insignificant they grow in the long run ; for when infirmity comes on, and fame and business lose their attractions, they must needs have somebody to love and trust, and they then become the dupes of wretched toad-eaters, and slaves to designing housekeepers. Such was poor James, who certainly was worthy of a better fate. His death, and the circumstances of it, have impressed my mind in a manner I could not have believed. I think we are somehow shrunk, and our consequence diminished, by losing the only person of eminence

among us. 'Tis like extinguishing a light. I have been diffuse, perhaps tedious, in what concerns the exit of this extraordinary man ; because I thought you might, like me, be anxious to know how people quit the world, who have made any noise or figure in it. His death found me sad, and has made me sadder. The sudden death of two poor men, our tenants, who have left young helpless families, which happened last week, threw a great damp over us. But I will no longer croak my funeral note : though death is ever present to my thoughts, not in his mildest form, I will " Give it its wholesome empire ; let it reign."

Adieu, dear Madam !

LETTER XC.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

*Begun June 19, 1796,
at Blair.*

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE past three charming days here, during which I have been soothed by the novelty of ease and leisure ; so immersed in the luxury of embowering groves, flowery walks, solemn shades of dark larches with drooping branches, that seem to weep over the wanderers that muse or mourn beneath them, or soft glades along the murmuring

Tilt, where every vegetable beauty blooms in full luxuriance, safe from the nipping frost or chilling blast ; so lost, I say, in a dream of pensive musing, which I have enjoyed at full leisure, free from the restraints of form, and the disturbance of intrusion, that, like other people given wholly up to pleasure, I seemed to forget my friends, my duty, and myself. Nay, I began to consider whether it was most eligible to turn hermitess or hamadryad. When the fair form of the virgin huntress of the woods, which adorns one of these sweet walks, drew my attention, I thought of sheltering in her haunts as a hamadryad ; but when the opening of a long vista disclosed the Gothick form of the old church of St. Bridget, my intentions took a more orthodox turn, and I began to adjust the dimensions of my cell, and think of cold vigils and midnight prayers. My head is now cooled ; my visions are vanished, and I am considering how I shall get home to make frocks and mend petticoats. M. would tell you why Mr. Grant brought and left me here, till his return from Stirling. If I could spend some days in this sweet place with you, one of my first *little* wishes would be gratified ; for I am now grown too wise to form many great wishes. I am just going ; his reverence hurries me, yet sends you all many good wishes.

Farewell !

LETTER XCI.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

June 25, 1796.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR very kind letter by Mr. Mackay gave me great ease of mind. His reverence, who delights in teasing me, and loves to hear the quick things I say when angry, would have it, you forgot me, was tired, &c. &c. I am too proud, and too jealous to tire any one. 'Tis the easiest thing in the world to stop my career, either in prose or verse, particularly the latter, which I always begin with fear and trembling. The dread of making myself ridiculous, and being laughed at as a pretender to genius, haunts and terrifies me, whenever, "the light of my soul begins to rise." Yet if the occasional short excursions of my fancy can give you a moment's pleasure, I should certainly feel that a powerful motive to indulge myself; for I frankly own, that the exercise of this rhyming faculty does now and then cheer the gloom of care, and blunt the stings of anxiety. I feel the same solace, which I suppose those who possess untutored powers of musical excellence do, in warbling their "wood notes wild," merely to gratify themselves and divert their solitude. After the confinement of the winter, and the sickly languor in which I had pined away the spring, I

enjoyed the return of health, ease, and leisure too much, while at Blair, to cramp myself with any set employment. Yet a ludicrous accident had very near set me to work. One afternoon I strolled down the approach towards the Duke's house alone, being unwilling to tax the complaisance of any of the family with attending me, and always loving a solitary ramble. I was thus deprived of the usual expedient of getting their private key to let myself into these elysian walks, in which I delighted to wander. The family that inhabit the mansion were not at home. However, hearing the Tilt murmur softly, and the birds sing sweetly within, I felt the true Highland impatience of bounds and enclosures, and, observing that part of the wall was formed by the bridge of the Tilt, which was then very low, I scrambled, with an agility that would do honour to one of R.'s goats, down the parapet wall, and over the broken craggs below the arch, till I got in dry and safe. My joy at outwitting the keepers, and feeling myself independent of locks and bars, broke out in a few stanzas, which I have not yet written down. As far as my pencil sketch assists memory, they begin thus :

Thy jealous walls, great Duke,* in vain
 All access would refuse :
 What bounds can highland steps restrain,
 What pow'r keep out the muse ?
 Where'er I go, I bring with me
 That mountain nymph, sweet Liberty.

.....
 * Duke of Athol.

Would you engross each breathing sweet
 Yon violet banks exhale,
 Or trees, with od'rous blooms replete,
 That scent the enamour'd gale ?
 Alike they smile for you and me,
 Like nature and sweet liberty, &c. &c

There is a great deal more ; but I must not fill up with trifles a paper allotted to more serious subjects. I think, however, I ought to tell you, as the moral of my little story, how the fear of detection disturbed this stolen intrusion. I was resolved to meditate a while in placid ease, as if tranquillity would come when bidden, and sought the thickest shades, but

“ Still as I went, I look'd behind,
 I heard a voice in every wind,
 And snatch'd a fearful joy.”

At length I set up my rest under a broad spreading cedar, beside the statue of Diana, which seemed to protect me. I thought of Dryden's description :

“ The graceful goddess was array'd in green,
 About her feet were little beagles seen,
 That watch'd with upward eyes the motions of
 their queen.”

This figure was not so appropriate ; it was scarce arrayed at all ; and the crescent was the only mark by which the sylvan goddess was distinguished. Here, however, I composed myself, was busy with my pencil, and forgot my fears ; when, all on a sudden, a monstrous heron bent its heavy

flight to my sheltering tree with such noisy impetuosity, that I started up in terror, thought of hunters and I know not what, felt the horrors of detected guilt, and finally took a short leave of Diana, and again committed myself to the protection of the nymph of the Tilt. Now you are to give this story importance, and make it instructive by your comments.

* * * * *

C. treats his wife worse, if possible, than you could expect. 'Tis miserable to see so much innocence, understanding, and good humour, sacrificed to such a strange compound of folly and madness, who has neither the spirit nor manners of a gentleman, to make one tolerate his eccentricities. I hope, nay, am sure, Charlotte will rather live, bloom, and die in single blessedness, than throw herself away in this manner. Now that in her apparent merit, and the general esteem she has obtained, I reap the fruit of all my cares, the agonies of fear and sorrow, which I have hitherto felt on her account, are richly paid in self gratulation. In trying to improve her, I have improved myself. My strenuous efforts for that purpose have exalted my mind above follies and frivolities, to which it might have sunk. The cruel singularity of her fate called forth in her support all the energies of my mind, and brought into exertion powers that I should not otherwise have known myself to possess. The kindness my other children receive from those who have no relative

tie to them, I consider as a reward for my maternal tenderness to her. You see, my good friend, what it is to confer benefits on the superstitious; for I do not consider even you as merely generous and sympathising, but as an agent, impelled by an over-ruling impulse, to do what you cannot possibly avoid doing. I write a few lines, below, to Charlotte. Excuse it, and believe me very truly

Yours.

LETTER XCII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, July 6, 1796.

I WISH to write both to you and Charlotte to-day, but shall begin with you: having conquered some scruples of modesty which checked my first intention, I shall bluntly avow the purport of this, which is, to request you would leave all the comforts and conveniences of your own pleasant and spacious dwelling, all the beauties which summer scatters so profusely over the Dune, and all the pleasures of refined and elegant society, to encounter the fatigue and disgust produced by a long journey, over dark moors and frowning mountains, by comfortless inns and bleak blasts; and all this for what? Will ye come into

the wilderness, not even to people clothed in the soft garb of insinuating manners, and flattering professions, but to be cooped up in a cottage, and share all its inconveniences ? To share them too with people who have lived too long out of the world to miss a thousand things become necessary in it ? To such, mutual affection, freedom, and simplicity, compensate for all the advantages, of which remoteness of situation and obscurity deprive them. I only suggest this, in case of your being left alone on the Dune ; but if you have the remotest wish of joining the projected journey towards the south, I would not even wish to influence your determination. Only if you are alone, permit me to remind you of your resolution to make an excursion every summer ; and, preferring the Highlands for your route, what would you think of taking forts William and Augustus in your way ? Mr. Grant begins to recover his looks and spirits, but has had a fever shock. A succession of indispositions in the family have made spring, and what is gone of summer, pass like an agitated dream.

* * * * *

Mr. G. is just come in, and insists on having his sincere regards included with mine, to you and your beloved.

I am, unchangeably,
Yours.

LETTER XCIII.*

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, August 9, 1796.

DEAR MADAM,

I HOPE you have, ere now, safely received my letter from Blair, though it seems to have lingered on the way. I saw Mrs. Stuart put it in her drawer. If it has miscarried, your loss is great, but Miss Coates's† incalculable; for the immortality of her *Bandeau* depended upon it, and I have preserved no copy. It would have given me pleasure to have obliged that lady in any thing, because she is very obliging herself. Her frank, easy manners, and careless vivacity, together with certain emanations of goodness from the heart, had almost broken through all my outguards of pride, prejudice, and independence. In spite of all her adventitious superiorities, I began to like her. Had she been as little in the sunshine as myself, I am sure I should be fond of

.....
 * This letter was written after an interview Charlotte and I had with four ladies, who came from Glasgow to Blair to meet us: these were, Mrs. Munro, Miss Munro (now the Hon. Mrs. Henry Erskine), Mrs. Macintosh Dunchattan, and Miss Coates.

† Miss Coates is a lady well known in the west of Scotland, whose character is such as it appears in these letters. She left her *Bandeau* unconsciously on the tomb of Fingal, a place at least said to be such; and the little poem alluded to was written on this incident.

her ; but the glitter of fortune and fashion, which has such an attraction for sycophants and imitators, repels people of spirit and delicacy, who value themselves and others only for such qualities as are innate and permanent. I allow her, and other rich people, all the merit they possess, and give them much more credit than to others for the same degree of excellence ; because their manner of life is less adapted to exercise the sterner virtues, and keep the heart warm and open.

I am always jealous of hazarding the only thing of value I have to give, my affection, by giving it where it may be despised, or received as the common tribute which servility pays to the prosperous. I am far from thinking myself poor, but I cannot bear others should think me so. In short, I will merely like Miss Coates, for I am not poor in spirit. - - - - My next care was, to prepare for Sandy's wedding, which proved, in his own way, a very splendid one. The day before the marriage, we had the bride's friends, with all the servants, dancing all the evening. The wedding-day, we had the same party at dinner, in the nursery. You are to understand, the bride served us eight years, and her swain seven, at a former period ; so we could not withhold our countenance. The *sheriff**

* Alexander Kennedy was called the sheriff in the parish, from the deference which the neighbours had for his decisions on all occasions. His master considered him as possessing the soundest judgment and most acute discernment of any person in his station he had ever known.

is rich, according to Anne's estimate of wealth, and excels in strong sound sense. You know that he is our tenant in the glebe, which forms an additional tie. He is counted penurious, but shone on this occasion. Four fat sheep, and abundance of game and poultry, were slain for the supper and following breakfast, which was only served in *the Chinese manner* to the inferior class. At this feast above a hundred persons assisted, three-score of which consisted of our children and rusticks, our tenants and servants, and the teachers of *arts* and sciences from the neighbouring hamlets. At the head of the long table was a cross one, raised higher, a humble imitation, I presume, of the *deise*, at which the courteous knights and noble dames sat in the days of Queen Guinever. There sat Capt. Donald, his reverence, and their ladies, with the professors of arts and sciences aforesaid, and Moome, in full glory ; and C—, and K—, and D—,* blooming and blushing like the morning. And there were poultry, and plovers, and a roast joint, and grouse in perfection. All this was lost on Charlotte, who only afforded her dignified presence at breakfast. The musick and dancing were very superior to any thing you could imagine. Don't whisper any thing so treasonable, but both were superior to many fashionable performers in each way. Mr. Grant took a fancy to be very wise and serious ; and reproved the *sheriff*

.....

* The Author's children.

for killing so many sheep, and collecting so many people ; and wondered at me for being so pleased. I never saw him ungracious before ; but he was not well. My versatility stood me in good stead. Every one was quiet, orderly, and happy in the extreme. I considered it was hard to grudge this one day of *glorious felicity* to those, who, though doomed to struggle through a life of hardship and penury, have all the love of society, the taste for conviviality, and even the sentiment that animates and endears social intercourse, which constitutes the enviable part of enjoyment in higher circles. It would be cruel to deprive such of the single opportunity their life affords, of being splendidly hospitable, and seeing all those, to whom nature or affection has allied them, rejoice together, at a table of their own providing ; and of seeing that table graced by such of their superiors, as they have been used to regard with a mixed sentiment of love and veneration. I never dance, and on those occasions join very little, outwardly, in the amusement. I rather sit rapt in reverie, or gaze in mute triumph at the collective felicity before me. The wedding was in a large barn. After breakfast, they danced a while on the green, and the scene closed with the young couple going home. The following evening we had all the children to dress, for the concluding ball in our itinerant dancing school ; so you must allow for my being fatigued with festivities. I am sure I have tired you with the history of Anne's wedding.

Had it been a fine ball, such as you are used to, I should not say half so much about it ; but I thought the scene would be new to you. It is such, indeed, as cannot take place but in these regions : here only you may condescend without degradation, for here only is the bond between the superior and inferior classes a kindly one. I cannot exactly say where the fault lies ; but cold disdain, on the one side, and a gloomy and rancorous envy on the other, fix an icy barrier between the upper and lower classes with you. Your low people are so gross, so sordid ; but if you treated them as we do ours, they would not be so coarse and hard ; they are now, however, past recovery. It grieves me to think the iron age of calculation approaches fast towards the sacred retreats of nature and of sentiment ; “ the unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations,” is fast receding. May I close my eyes in peace, before its final departure !— Pray tell Miss Munro, of whom I delight to think, and could love, though she were mistress of thousands, that I recollect the night we spent together at Dunkeld, as an alderman does a turtle-feast ; but I fear the vigil was too much for her. Had I been purse-bearer, I would have urged a longer stay ; but delicacy kept me silent. On Monday a man goes, by whom I will enclose a pair of the Sybil’s* garters for Miss Coates. I am grateful

.....

* Mrs. Machardy, usually called the Sybil by the author’s family, was a native of the Isle of Sky, the widow of a worthy man who had served the *Highland publick* fifty

to that lady for encouraging the venerable Sybil's manufacture. She sang Lochaber and mournful Melpomene to Charlotte yesterday, very distinctly, if not melodiously, and will assuredly contend with Old Parr. Her brother is alive, and is an hundred and four. In her I have the pleasure of an old woman's conversation, without the plague of gossiping ; for, if she has any scandal, King William is the object of it. She is full of anecdote, but scorns to talk of any thing that happened within the last forty years. Madame de Maintenon is the heroine of her imagination ; she talks of her as if she were still living, and constantly quotes to our girls the ivory wheel with which she spun Lewis into subjection ; for she considers spinning as one of the cardinal virtues, and is at

..... ,
 years in the capacity of a school-master. She was a person of undaunted fortitude, great industry, and ingenuity ; and was remarkable for preserving all her faculties to the last day of her life, which was extended to a hundred and eight years. At ninety-six, she danced reels with great spirit, and sung the songs abovementioned when above a hundred. She looked up to the minister as her benefactor, because he procured her a pension of three pounds yearly, and allowed her a cottage on his farm for her abode. Till the year of her death, she carried on a manufacture peculiar to the Isle of Sky. In a small loom, of primitive construction, she wrought garters of gaudy colours and particular texture, which make a kind of ornament to the Highland dress, and are very much sought after for that purpose : these garters she spun, died, and wove ; and the author was frequently an agent in disposing of them. Among the poems published by the author, is one sent, by the Sybil's request, with a pair of those garters, to the Marquis of Huntley, on his assuming the habit of the country.

this hour spinning fine wool on the distaff, of which she proposes making garters for the Marquis. You see I will not rest till you are completely Lagganized. You must be interested in all my odd people, or I will have nothing to do with you. Ought you not? Am I not interested in your Neptune, and your great cat, and did not I commemorate your turkey-hen? The least you can do in return is to venerate my Sybil. Adieu! Tell me if I have tired you.

LETTER XCIV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, October 3, 1796.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAD the pleasure of receiving your letter, and am much consoled by finding you understand so well the motives of my grief for poor M. which I feel still a weighty pressure on my spirits. I feared you would consider the excess of my sorrow on this occasion, as absurd, or chimerical. Mr. Macintosh reproaches me for not letting him know of poor Moome's* difficulties ;

* Moome is an endearing appellation in the Gaelick, to which the English affords no correspondent phrase ; it means a person who feels the affection, and performs the duties, of a mother to children not her own. Such was Moome's love to the children of the cottage ; and such their gratitude, that our friend was always distinguished by this kindly epithet.

her noble spirit would have been hurt if I had. She was used to difficulties, and took pleasure, not to say pride, in conquering them. I believe one reason why I did not expatiate on her singular merit to you, was a fear that you should think I wanted to awake your sympathy on her behalf. Besides her inflexible sincerity, which was to some very unwelcome, her strong attachments, and the reverence she paid to merit wherever she found it, she possessed a sturdy independent spirit, which was her chief distinction. This made her submit to work, and to live harder than any one, that she might have it in her power to entertain her friends occasionally, and bestow charity, without giving trouble to any one; and her exertions in this way were incredible.

* * * * *

Thus much of the

“Short and simple annals of the poor”
you will hear with patience. Yet is it not presumption to call Moome poor, who was so respectable, and gave so much away? Her personal wants were few, and small indeed; but her exertions, and the resources she found, or made, to preserve independence, and exert beneficence, were astonishing. Our children were the pleasure of her life, and pride of her heart. They were her theme wherever she went. None of the persons you ever served or obliged, could be so sensible of your kindness, as she was of your

goodness to her son. Indeed, the generous are always grateful. She was as proud of Clan's* praise as the vainest of mortals could be of her own. She is buried with our children, under the shade of our evergreens; and, if ever we can afford it, we shall place a stone over her, with this inscription:

Sacred to the memory of
HELEN MACINTOSH,
Whose integrity was unsullied,
Whose beneficence was unbounded,
and
Whose fortitude was unequalled!

You must have seen the grief of her poor neighbours to form any idea of it. I perfectly agree with you, not only from the determination of my judgment, but from the sad experience of the heart, that the esteem and affection of a truly worthy person is an invaluable acquisition, and the loss a privation unspeakable. It is with the utmost difficulty, that I can turn my thoughts from the painful retrospect of the hardships she suffered here, to the view of her present felicity, which is my only comfort.

Have you read Lord Gardenstone's Sketches, or detached observations, I believe they are? It is very much the kind of reading that you like. I never met with any one that thought exactly as I do of Shakspeare, of David Hume, and of Queen Mary, but he. In politicks we should never agree. I am, &c. &c.

.....

* Mr. Macintosh.

LETTER XCV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, Jan. 21, 1797.

DEAR MADAM,

I READ in your last letter a kind apology for some harsh truths contained in your former. At the same time that my feelings proved their harshness, my judgment assented to their truth. I knew you could have no motive but zealous and anxious friendship, for entering so warmly into the subject. Perhaps there is none living who could worse bear the killing glance

“Of hard unkindness’ altered eye,
That mocks the tear it forc’d to flow.”

But indeed I have not been used to bear it; never mortal had friends more kind, more constant, and more faithful than I have, from my very childhood. I never indeed looked for flatterers in my friends, and always bore their wholesome counsel patiently. It is certainly a venial fault to shew some zeal in extenuating the errors of those we tenderly love, and further you do not blame me. By this time you certainly pity me.

* * * * *

You never say a word about people I wish to hear of. Upon what object is the energetick spirit of Miss Coates employed at present? To be a good daughter, an ardent friend, and active

manager, are all very good things in themselves, but not equal to filling up the capacities of her great mind, which could never have found room in a less body. Whether is that active soul, at present, animated by patriotism, enlarged by philosophy, or exalted by devotion?

Adieu ! dear Madam ! Convey to your family my sincere wishes, that each returning season may add to their felicity.

LETTER XCVI.

TO MRS. F—R.

Glasgow, April 7, 1797.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR most acceptable letter was transmitted to me from Laggan, a fortnight ago, and gave me great comfort. I see your heart and soul are all alive, and am convinced you will be the very same A. Ourry till the last hour of your existence. I likewise triumph in preserving my identity, and rising, like trodden chamomile, from every depression, whether mental, corporeal, or pecuniary. But you outdo my outdoings ; tranquillity and moderate cheerfulness cost me an effort ; but your spirit and vivacity are perennial flowers, which bloom all day and every day. These gifts were bestowed on you liberally, but

not superfluously, when one considers all the varied exigencies through which they have supported you. I think you have as much need of them in your present seclusion, as at any other period; though the sprightliness of your description sets some unpleasant things in so ludicrous a point of view, that one must needs be amused for the time. I sincerely lament what you must feel in seeing so deep a shade of imperfection in a character you love and venerate. It is one of the severest trials we can encounter, to be deceived where we expect so much. Old age and solitude, or, what is worse than solitude, living always with most uncongenial people, may have produced an infirmity, which, after all, we should compassionate. There is one who will never deceive you, who I hope is by this time on his way to protect and comfort you, who will both excite and reward all the best affections of your heart. When one sees how worthy persons of our sex are thrown away on the undeserving, a married woman is too happy whose husband has plain sense, pure morals, and an upright heart, of which his wife has the sole possession. Now, after saying so much of you, it is but reasonable I should take my turn, and give some account of myself. Knowing I am little addicted to complain, you will the more regret that I have been all winter distressed with a severe rheumatick tooth-ach, much aggravated by my attendance on poor C. during an illness, and my anxiety about Mr. Grant's going to Ireland

with his son, while his health was so doubtful. In the spring I began to revive a little, and came here on the urgent invitation of my friends, who thought I was likely to derive some benefit from the journey. Here then I have been for two months, as happy as returning health, attentive friendship and kindness, and general esteem and civility, can make me. My father has got a very pleasant house, surrounded by a garden and grass enclosure, near Dunchattan. I sometimes stay a week in town with my friend Mrs. Smith. Her husband has been very prosperous in business ; and, amidst their newly acquired affluence, they possess a high degree of the publick esteem, to which they are well entitled, both from their general beneficence and hospitality, and from the moderation and simplicity they preserve amidst this high distinction of every kind. After an interval of nine years, she had a fine boy lately. They are very happy too in their eldest son, who promises to be all they would pray for ; but he is rather delicate in his constitution. The circle is never complete. I think Swift and Co. or some of those old friends of ours, remark, that they have seldom met with superior powers of understanding joined to amiable qualities in a woman, but that there was a balance of bad health to be set on the opposite side of the account. Amiable men are very scarce indeed ; I do not know a dozen in my whole acquaintance ; and, alas ! I fear the same rule will apply to them. I don't

mean a satire on the sex ; I know good, worthy, and respectable men ; but where soft manners, and a pure and delicate mind are added, I call the man amiable ; and so does the world ; for every one is delighted with an amiable man. The alteration here strikes me more forcibly than when I was in town last, because I have longer days to look about me. I see nothing but what reminds me of an old song, where a poor Highlander says

“ Scotlant pe turn’d an Englant now.”

We have all manner of luxuries, pastry shops, and toy shops. I remember when there could not be a doll or a tart bought in town, but in a particular shop allotted for each. As for the luxuries of intellect, circulating libraries, &c. there is no end of them. There is a lecture, founded by the will of a late professor, that is to exalt and illuminate the citizens prodigiously. The lecturer appears a very good, and, I am told, is a very learned man ; though I despair of learning much from him. It might be a very harmless lounge for his female auditory, if the idea of being greatly the wiser, for hearing a man talk an hour about carbon and chymistry, would not lead to conceit and affectation. The having an additional place of publick resort, too, encourages that insatiable love of change, that restlessness, which is, I think, the great and growing evil of the age. Shakspeare talks of minds

“ That cream and mantle like a standing pool.”

Modern minds will not be long enough quiet to allow the cream to rise. I always thought a moderate knowledge of geography and history a very desirable acquisition for a woman ; because it qualifies her for mingling in solid and rational conversation, and makes her more a companion for her husband, and brother, and so forth. The more pleasing and attainable branches of belles-lettres lie within her own province, that of the imagination and the heart. What business women have with any science but that which serves to improve and adorn conversation, I cannot comprehend. For my own part, I cannot conceive a woman devoting her whole time and faculties to the study of any particular art or science. This must be done by one who has an ambition to attain any degree of excellence ; and why should any one plague herself and other people with dabbling and skimming the surface of such subjects ? If a woman were to talk profoundly on philosophy, astronomy, or chymistry, for instance, very few would understand her ; if she talked on such subjects in a conceited superficial manner, no mortal would wish to hear her. That knowledge which neither improves the heart nor meliorates the temper, which makes us neither more useful nor more pleasing, I cannot consider as a desirable acquisition. I wish people would begin to work tapestry again. I look on my Dresden apron with great delight, when I consider how peaceably I sat to work at it, with my thoughts at liber-

ty for reflection, and all the time forming the habits of quiet application and the love of peace. I have no ambition to hear the modern belles declare their *dark sayings on the harp*, till such time as I am convinced that they stay more at home, have less vanity, and make better wives and daughters than formerly. I have teased you too long. You, who have no children to spoil, do not feel this subject as I do. I dearly love young people; the gaiety, the candour, the nature, the modesty one is so delighted with in young creatures who have an unsophisticated character,—all these are a great sacrifice to make to pert pretensions. Adieu! my dear friend. Age *shall not* be dark and unlovely to us, while we cherish our kindly affections. The best way to do this is to have as little intercourse with the world, and as much with each other, as possible. Retirement is certainly the only safe asylum for delicate minds and delicate constitutions :

“The world is frantick, fly the race profane,
Nor you, nor I, shall its compassion move.”

And we will not require it. God bless you, prays
Your faithful friend.

LETTER XCVII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, June 8, 1797.

DEAR MADAM,

I HOPE this will find you in health and spirits ; for, I assure you, (not even excepting Miss Pagan and James Smith) I have left nothing behind me that I am so anxious about. William, little Charlotte, and I, had a very pleasant day's journey to Perth. I found my relations there very well, and cordially kind, and was sorry I could spend but a day with them. - - - - I had an agreeable day's journey from Dunkeld, or Blair rather, with Charlotte, who proves an excellent travelling companion ; always cheerful, and full of observation, and easily silenced, when I wish to indulge my meditations. We took many long, considerate walks, for I dreaded Paddy's being overloaded. Indeed, the last day, when I began to fear for both William and the horse, they appeared to me like Thomson's man in the snow,

“ Stung with the thoughts of home ; the thoughts of
home

Rush'd on her nerves, and call'd their vigour
forth ;

so that we reached home by sunset. The chaplain had come a great way to meet me the day before, but was disappointed, and would come no

more. I found all the young tribe waiting at the opposite side of the river. Never shall I forget the extravagance of Charlotte's joy at seeing them. She cried in transport, "The children! the children!" fell into violent bursts of laughter, and sprang up like a frantick creature, while we were crossing. The rest were as happy to meet her. Mr. Grant and C. I believe felt their share of joy too, though they were not so outrageous in the display of it. C. looks thin, but most courageously combats the *azure demons* by dint of activity and exertion. She has all things in high order, and is become a great florist.

* * * * *

She is an engaging child,—quick, sensible, and very good tempered; but such an odd, staring, sun-burnt thing, you have not seen. 'Tis quite an original,—not the least like the rest; and, I think, I like the creature with a different sort of love. The Chaplain is all good and forgiving, and does not reproach me for my stay so much as I feared, perhaps deserved. There is nothing I look back upon with such regret as not having seen Miss M. oftener while in town; and the more, because I flatter myself the regret is mutual. What an endearing place home is, after all; the dwelling of true consequence and genuine comfort. Moome, and Bar, and the prophet in his mantle, and all the satellites of the cottage, begin to move round their wonted orbits. See what it is to hear lectures; even I am in a fair way to speak with tongues.

LETTER XCVIII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, July 29, 1797.

I AM now in haste to thank you for a kind letter, which came just in time to abate fears and jealousies. Not that I think you can forget me; but you know unequal spirits and irritable nerves make dreaming people, like me, at times see things through a dark medium. 'Tis not on my own merit I depend, but on your constancy of temper, and knowledge of character, which must have taught you long since to relinquish the vain expectation of meeting spotless, perfect friends, to which no human creature is entitled, fallible as we all are. Yet such expectations, unreasonably indulged, and justly disappointed, have made many a one go through life dark and chilly, without having their hearts opened, their countenances brightened, or their virtues invigorated by the cheering cordial of friendship. This leads me to congratulate you on your present enjoyment of this nature. I feel true satisfaction in thinking how much you and Miss Polson enjoy each other.

* * * * *

I will rather try to tranquillize myself by thinking of poor B., who, I hope, has paid her duty to you, and never felt or inspired a harshly painful sensation. C. is well, but looks thin, and main-

tains a most vigorous and commendable warfare with dejection, by constant employment. - - - I give you joy of your heroick nephew's * arrival, and hope he will pay his duty to you, on your return from your Highland excursion, which I see is likely to be deferred to the shortening days, and weeping equinox. Consider the green delights of my elysium, Fort Augustus ; the " Siberian solitude," as Johnson called it, of Strathe- rick ; and the " sublime thunder" of Fyers. Not a word of the cottage, but that it contains your faithful friend. Farewell. If I see you again, it must be here.

LETTER XCIX.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE been now nearly six weeks in perfect ignorance about you all. I leave you to judge how my busy imagination has wrought. To think you grown careless, is inconsistent with the general steadiness of your character. What then shall I think ? I am sure you are of my opinion, that nothing less than a want of integrity, or very

..... , . . .

* Captain Graham Moore, of the Navy, who had just then distinguished himself under Sir John Borlase Warren, in taking some French vessels on their way to a projected invasion on Ireland, and carried them into Clyde.

intolerable caprice of temper, can cause a breach of friendship. I never lost a friend in my life, that I know of. I have seen them depart to a better world, where I humbly hope to meet them again, with renewed and exalted affection ; but I never lost one by change or unkindness. If I should meet with such a new species of affliction, you will be both the first and last to occasion it, for I will never, never open my heart more. Why multiply the ties that bind me to this vain world, or open fresh sources of affliction in the sufferings of others ? You would hear of poor Mrs. Macpherson's death, which happened very lately, near us. Hers was a truly useful life, divided betwixt the care of her soul, and the care of her family. She had real principle, and great probity, though she was not gentle and conciliating. One reason why she was not so, was, that the rigour of her inflexible veracity and integrity could not bend to accommodate itself to other people's deviations ; and she carried sincerity, if that were possible, to excess. I certainly ought to have grieved for her ; for, though too much engrossed with more important objects to look for much gratification in social intercourse, she invariably shewed marked attachment to me. But her case was so hopeless here, and so full of hope and assurance in what regards hereafter, that her death seemed a release, and apparent benefit to herself. Her boys will do very well : she has one girl, who is here now. We are all much pleased with the frankness and

benevolence that appear in her disposition. Let me know when we are to expect you. It must be after the 5th of August ; we shall then be solemnly engaged.* This could not be sooner, for 'tis only on the 2d that people return from the glens. One of the great concerns of life here is, settling the time and manner of these removals. Viewing the procession pass, is always very gratifying to my pastoral imagination. I rise early for that purpose. The people look so glad and contented, for they rejoice at going up ; but, by the time the cattle have eat all the grass, and the time arrives when they dare no longer fish and shoot, they find their old home a better place, and return with nearly as much alacrity as they went. I do love these vestiges of primitive life, that put me in mind of the plains of Mamre, and the flocks of Rachel. The season is fine, and every thing thrives and looks well, from our flowers and our children, down to our pigs and potatoes. You must come in time to see the flax under its azure bells, and the potatoes in full purple bloom. These humble rustick beauties have charms for me, beyond much finer objects. I will only add, "*Come and see.*" Adieu ! simply, laconically.

.....

* With the celebration of the Sacrament.

LETTER C.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

September 9, 1797.

DEAR MADAM,

I KNEW, some years ago, a good-natured worthy creature, a great simpleton nevertheless, at Inverness. He, to his great delectation, prevailed on a fine, sweet-looking girl, who had more sense than himself, and of whom he was doatingly fond, to take him for better and worse. To be sure he was half mad with exultation, when he had gained his point ; and when their friends came to visit them, without waiting for their congratulations, he used to start up, embrace them, and wish them much joy. A clever little boy, the same whom Clan sent out to Antigua t'other day, happening to be in the house, was quite scandalized at his want of propriety, and told him those people had no share of his pleasure, and that he had better be quiet and let them wish him joy. Now I feel much inclined to follow my wise friend Frank's example, and wish you joy of the chaplaincy's being obtained for Mr. Grant, because I am convinced that you feel as much joy on the occasion as I possibly can. Nothing less than the power of procuring an essential benefit to a family we love and esteem, could indeed exceed our present satisfaction. Before I quit the subject of

benefits conferred, let me detail to you the late arrival from Miss Ourry that was, for now there is no such person. Though the transition from this to potatoes is sudden and rather violent, yet as you know little things are great to me, you will be pleased to hear, that we have a crop of that useful root, far superior in quantity and quality to any former, and that our corn is also excellent. The cheerfulness of our work-people, and the soft serenity of the air, during these tepid gleams that Thomson speaks of so feelingly, have almost made us, this autumn,

“Taste the rural life in all its joy,”

and elegance. Never, never can the rural life be tasted or enjoyed by those who are too rich to enter into rural employments, or who lead, that most insipid of all lives, a town life in the country. Those whose anxious views are confined to mere profit, who have their bodies worn by labour, and their souls by care, have neither leisure nor discernment to admire the face of nature with ardour. In this, indeed, the lower class of Highlanders excel all other low classes, being possessed of a superior degree both of fancy and feeling, and their pastoral cares including more, both of leisure and variety, than falls to the lot of other peasants; but, geographically speaking, numberless peculiar blessings are attached to the temperate zone of life, that middle state which Agur prayed for. Charlotte is well, cheerful, and means to be very eloquent on the subject of *drapery* one

of these days. Mr. Grant means to be equally eloquent on a more dignified subject. Now you are not to be surprised or over-dazzled, when I have thus announced the blaze that is about to break forth from these worthies. Adieu !

LETTER CI.

TO MRS. F—R.

Laggan, May 16, 1799.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WROTE to you fully last winter, and am sure you must have answered, if my letter arrived ; so I conclude either it or the answer has been lost. I must now be brief and distinct in telling my sad story, lest an event I hourly expect should arrest my pen, or perhaps finally close the scene. All spring I meant to write, but the perturbation of my mind, and the wearing anguish of suspense, put it out of my power. I cannot detail, but shall sketch as well as I can. My dear, dear John, the most benevolent, sincere, and affectionate of human beings, who knew no stain of vice or meanness, but was all made of honour, truth, and generosity, was called away from a world that was not worthy of so much innocence and integrity, on the third of April last, two months after he had completed his fifteenth year.

Judge how severe this must be under the weakness and apprehension of my present circumstances. Yet it has pleased God to support me, in a singular and un hoped for manner, under this overwhelming calamity. If my sorrow was great, so were my consolations ; and I have been enabled to look with gratitude to my remaining mercies. I can think of the past with composure, nay at times with a mournful complacency. Mr. Grant sends love to you. He bears up like a Christian ; but from what he feels, and what he fears, is really an object of pity. Charlotte is here just now, come to attend me on the approaching occasion. This is very inconvenient, and an exertion of more than filial piety. To compass it, she defers the happiness of an amiable and deserving man, to whom she is about to be united. She paid constant attention to her cousin during his illness. He died in his grandfather's house. He expected his fate for a month before ; his patience and resignation were singular and exemplary. That sense of piety which sunk deep and early into his mind, continued unimpaired during his short journey through life, and supported him in the close of it.

LETTER CII.

TO MRS. BROWN, GLASGOW.

Laggan, May 7, 1800.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN,

WHY am I so dead to memory? If you and your sister thought half as much of me as I do of you, you could not be so forgetful and silent. Yet I will not blame you. I hear from C—ne you are both much occupied in the hard task of attending your brother in an illness which appears dangerous. You may believe he and his family have my sincerest sympathy. His goodness of heart, and constant kindness and good will to me, made me always take a great interest in him. I am extremely concerned to find, that the domestic comforts you all so eminently possessed have of late been, in different ways, interrupted and embittered; but this is the lot of humanity. The cup of sorrow is in constant circulation; we must all drink, and most of us drink deeply. It is not material whether your turn or mine comes first; the thing is, to benefit by the draught; for it requires very little self-examination to convince us that we are unequal to prosperity, and unable to sustain it without either growing careless and selfish, or attaching ourselves too strongly to the things that perish, to the utter exclusion of those which are shortly to be our all. For my own part,

the truth of the psalmist's emphatick description of our nature, that "Man walketh in a vain show, and disquieteth himself in vain," was never so strongly imprest on my mind as at this very time. There is not a person I care for in this country, that is not sunk in grief, from the loss of some near and dear connexion,—lost, some of them, in the most aggravating manner, by dreadful accidents, duels from trifling causes, and the scourge of war, which has so long desolated the nations, though we are but beginning to feel its worst horrors. In Holland, there fell five or six officers whom I well knew, or was some way connected with. My reflections are to the last degree solemn and gloomy, and I still imagine myself surrounded by the hovering shades of the departed. It is lucky for me that the task of nursing, besides unusual exertions in domestick matters, which I am obliged to make, so far engross me, that I am not at full leisure to contemplate the dark scenery which imagination continually presents. Indeed there is no room for the play of fancy; real evil surrounds me; sickness, aggravated by famine, calls our attention daily, hourly, to new objects of distress. I once thought to snatch a fortnight to see my children, and embrace you both. But it will not be. The Pastor is appointed by the Duke to overlook the distribution of grain which he charitably allots to his tenants. He does not, on that account, go to Edinburgh, as he once intended; and I cannot leave him.

LETTER CIII.

TO MRS. F—R, AT PLYMPTON.

Laggan, May 9, 1800.

MY DEAR, KIND FRIEND,

I HAVE long been indebted to you, which is not usual ; and if you consider my multiplied cares and duties, you should not wonder at some wide chasms. But when there is an interruption, you may impute it to want of health, to the irresolute delay of a mind worn with ardent solicitude, and constant exertion—to any thing but the selfish chill of increased years, which I declare has never shed its torpid influence over me. An enthusiast I was born, and an enthusiast I will die. When I prefer my ease to the duties of friendship, it is all over with me, my faculties must be on the decline ; but while they remain entire, and my heart continues to beat, it will glow with those affections which have warmed and charmed it through the short journey of life. Time has done little to alter me ; and the impetuous tide of vanity and luxury, which has overwhelmed and pervaded all habitable space, has produced no other effect on me than exciting my scorn and pity. I declare, had I my pilgrimage to begin anew through the wilderness, I would not give my share of the endearing charities of life, my bustles and struggles to procure ease and comfort to those I love, my faithful friendships, and

“ My humble toils and destiny obscure,”
for all that wealth and fashion can bestow. I have seen just enough of it to shew me how little is its real value ; and could I get a little health, a little leisure, and a little sunshine, I know not whom I would exchange with ; though I know very few would relish the state I am so reconciled to. But ease, liberty, and a kind of rough plenty, are become habitual to me ; and I could scarce find them in the same degree any where else. Yet the kind of ease I talk of is quite a distinct thing from leisure ; that is an inheritance I am not born to. I like very much the description you give of the manner in which you pass your time, and almost envy your reading leisure of evenings, and your fine climate, and flower-garden. We are just beginning to have a little elbow room after the temporary pinch occasioned by setting out our children ; and now that we are easier and could do it, were I revisited with such an attack as I had last spring, it might be found expedient for me to go a little nearer the sun, though the little birds of those gayer regions should wonder at me, like an owl come into the sunshine. I wish you were not so fearfully remote ; Devonshire lies almost beyond the reach of hope. Yet I have a strong presentiment that I shall yet embrace you. I have many inducements to bring me a part of the way, and do not make desperate resolutions, like you, of never stirring out of the place, though I have so many ties to confine me.

I have already told you so much of what I think of wealth, that you are in no danger of being pitied by me for not being rich, according to the kind usage of the world. Nay, I insist, that in all modest and rational computation, you are rich. You contrive to be beneficent, munificent indeed in one instance, after supplying all your wants ; and then the luxuries of a library and flower-garden are yours in a superior degree, because both are, in a manner, of your own creating, and you taste them so exquisitely. At the same time that I admire your generous exertions for your little *protégée*, I regret the self-denial you must exercise to enable you to do what others, less self-denying, must and would do, if you did not save them the trouble. I think, as the world would give us no credit for our Quixotism, even though we were of consequence enough to be known as Quixotes, we must even laud and praise each other. The approbation of a dear friend is certainly the very next thing to the sweet whispering voice of inferior self-complacency. A fine prospect is a very fine thing, but a fine retrospect is

“ The sober certainty of waking bliss.”

I can easily conceive the blank one must feel in the society of a person, however well meaning, who is neither cultivated nor susceptible of culture. One regrets to see one's companion excluded from sharing one's best pleasures. Then one tries, and finds it sowing in the sand. I found a good soil, and was richly rewarded. But

indeed it cost me no little pains to unspoil, what early prejudices had done so much to spoil. I will not shock you with an account of this country, where the prophecy of famine seems about to be fulfilled; nor will I distress you with particulars, at present, of the death of your acquaintance. It was a wonderful occurrence, and shall be explained hereafter. He took a romantick fancy of going to hunt deer in the desert hills, for a Christmas feast, which he had projected. He and three or four attendants, sheltering in a hut, were surprised at night by something like a whirlwind, or avalanche; in short, they were buried in the ruins of the hut. You can have no idea what a gloom has overspread us. Mr. Grant was always partial to him. There are so many tender, as well as strange circumstances involved in this dismal tale, that the mind cannot shake off the impression. My dear little good boy has cost me little in nursing, he was so peaceable. Yet in March I found it necessary to banish him, as I began to give way fast. Anxiety for the dubious state of many poor people about us preyed upon my mind; even my unconquered spirit began to fail. Indeed my heart trembled all winter for poor Charlotte, who was in a very declining state, but Monday last I had the comfort to hear that on the 29th April she was safely delivered of a son. I am greatly relieved, and have heard since that she was in a fair way. I thank God, I am hourly growing better since. She has been soliciting

for one of the children all winter ; I am going to send Ourry for a few months. Mrs. Macintosh expected you would be much enriched by your uncle's death ; but I told her to cherish no such vain expectations. Mr. Grant sends his love, and wishes you to know what an excellent fisherman he is become. I am quite serious ; we are never without a dish extraordinary of his procuring. Our lilacs and laburnums bloomed last summer, and will now be in full beauty. We had such showers of roses ! and we are so pleased with our little flower nurseries, under the windows ! and all this in the very teeth of climate ; while you sail on your botanick voyage with wind and tide in your favour. How much have I still to say ! But I will leave it all unsaid, to beg that you may not wed yourself too much to your hermitage. Too much ease, convenience, and dominion, breed either apathy, or peevishness, just as people are formed. Spend a little time with Miss M. ; the revival of early and tender friendship renews the springs of life. You will relish your cot the more when you return to it. Adieu !

LETTER CIV.

TO MISS GRANT,* GLASGOW.

I THINK I have it now in my power to fulfil the promise I made you, of sending you a translation from the Gaelick. You judge rightly, that I am vain of knowing so much of that original and emphatick language. In my next, I will send you a literal translation, which I have by me, of part of an ancient fragment, a genuine one, remember, and hitherto untouched. The present subject, however, is modern. The mourner whom the bard personates, is, indeed, soft, modest, melancholy, fair; and the deep and real distress which the song commemorates, is yet recent. Mrs. Reid, a lady in the neighbourhood of Athol, went to the summer shealings in the mountains, with three remarkably fine children, a boy and two girls: the boy, who was the eldest, was distinguished by a remarkably good ear for musick, and, though but eight years old, played on the violin very sweetly. The children caught a pestilential fever, which some poor neighbour had brought up into the glen, and, being very remote from all as-

.....

* Miss Charlotte Grant; afterwards, Mrs. John Smith, of Glasgow; often alluded to in these letters, as the relation and *protégée* of the Minister of Laggan. There is no date to this letter; but it must have been written before the preceding one.

sistance and the convenience and attendance that sickness requires, the death of all the children was the consequence, at a very early period of the disease. The bard, who soothed the sorrows of the parents by this composition, appears to me to possess native genius. Let him speak for himself:

“ Ah ! still must I languish,
 Thus pining in anguish,
 For my joy and my pleasure,
 My heart's dearest treasure,
 The fair sun-beams that brighten'd my soul !
 The loud storm blew boldly,
 The bleak blast came coldly
 My sweet buds all blighted :
 Forlorn and benighted,

 Ah ! nothing can ease or console !

Where was beauty, fresh blowing,
 Where was stature, fast growing :
 Where was truth and affection,
 Where was thought and reflection,
 That so early appear'd in full bloom ?
 At midnight when musing,
 All comfort refusing,
 I hear, thro' my groaning,
 Your voices low moaning ;
 O, speak to me once from the tomb !

The sighs of my mourning
 Arise with the morning,
 And when ev'ning's soft show'rs
 Weep fresh o'er the flow'rs,
 My tears fall as silent, unseen.
 Who hears me lamenting,
 But, sadly consenting,
 Must pity my grieving,

Since heav'n, thus bereaving,
Has wither'd my fair plants so green !

The viol so sprightly
Who touches so lightly ?
O, peace to its sounding,
My troubl'd heart wounding,
For my son shall awake it no more !
Nor my daughters, gay smiling,
My cares once beguiling,
From their cold bed returning,
Shall banish my mourning,
Or hear me their absence deplore !

O, children beloved,
Where are you removed ?
Have you left us so early,
Who cherish'd you dearly,
For the dark silent chambers of death !
The fair sun returning,
Shall light the new morning ;
Fresh grass on the mountains,
Fresh flow'rs by the fountains,
Shall wake with the spring's gentle breath :

But no morning, new breaking,
My children shall waken ;
'Tis hopeless to number
The days of their slumber,
The long sleep that awakens no more !
Shall the cold earth's dark bosom
Still hide each fair blossom !
Have angels not borne them
Where bright rays adorn them,
Where on wings of new rapture they soar ?

On my fancy thus beaming,
My eyes ever streaming,

My breast ever heaving,
Their image relieving,
Shall soothe into pensive repose ;
In beauty transcendent,
In brightness resplendent,
I shall meet them where life has no close."

I have preserved, as far as possible, the simplicity of the original ; but its tenderness, the solemn sadness that runs through it, its pathetick beauties, I am sensible I have not reached. I have left out many verses. Poetry in the ancient style knows nothing of concentrating thoughts. It was the object of undivided and unwearied attention, to minds susceptible of all its beauties, unchilled by interest, unhardened by vanity. Children of nature did not turn wearied and satiated from the expression of genuine feeling to listen to every rattle by which novelty allures frivolous minds. Now you have a modern poem, which, if I have not spoiled it in the translation, will give you some idea of the language of nature and true sorrow. The stanzas are in a form unusual and uncouth ; but I could not think of deviating from the original measure, which is adapted to a wild plaintive tune, quite in unison with the sadness of the subject. If you set a due value on my effort to oblige you, I shall send you the " Tale of other Times " very soon ; and am, with all due respect for your laudable curiosity, Yours, &c.

LETTER CV.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

June—1800.

DEAR MADAM,

HOW has your letter soothed and fed my sorrows, my hopeless, helpless sorrows ! For how can I remember without pain, and how can I forget her, whom long habit, ardent affection, and perpetual solicitude, had mixed with my very being, and entwined with every thought ! Have I been a single hour awake, for twelve years past, without thinking of her ? I did not meet with an occurrence at home, I did not see a flower in my walks, without considering what she should think of it. Every thing is full of her ; and it is so, and will be so. Still I see her graceful form ; still I hear the language of truth and rectitude, expressed with artless elegance, and forcible simplicity. Dear, ever dear, lovely Charlotte ! whose purity of heart was too congenial to superior natures to remain long here. I would not give up the sad satisfaction of constant retrospect, ideal conversation, and anticipated re-union, for all apathy avoids, or vanity enjoys. Your feelings are so much mine, that to you, of all others, I will not attempt to describe them. What was she not to me, *daughter, sister, friend, counsellor* !—and, what of all binds closest, fellow-sufferer, and fellow-mourner. Have

I been so many years shedding tears, for her unequalled sufferings, and shall I now weep because she is released from them ! The fleeting and unsatisfactory nature of all earthly things, will drive me for refuge and consolation to that source from which all that was lovely and estimable first emanated, and to which it hastens to return ; and then short will be our separation, and great my reward. Dearest, best child of my heart ! how wonderfully has she been led into light, through the gloomiest and most intricate paths. With the highest spirit and the strongest feelings, she was made to drink the cup of adversity of its bitterest ingredients. Prosperity, we are told is a harder trial ; of that she barely tasted, and was summoned to share the abundant mercies of her Redeemer, in whose salvation I have reason to think she humbly trusted.

I envy you, however, the last poor comfort of knowing what she said, and felt, and looked, when the great change was approaching. I feel much—much for you ; her affections were your dear-bought own. You were entitled to them, and could hope to enjoy them to the last : and true affection is no small matter, to one who knows its value and its rarity. The Divine Goodness supported her to the last,—when she was enabled, (at the very time when nature was sunk so low that she could not attend to her own infant, even in this extremity) to entreat you to bear no remembrance of unkindness she had experienced. May we be enabled to imitate her noble example, &c. &c.

Yours, ever.

LETTER CVI.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, Nov. 14, 1800.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAD a very kind letter from you some weeks ago. I felt it, as I feel every thing, in its full force and extent. I answered it from the overflowing of my heart, in the language of pure truth. I fear I shall never grow old, in the true worldly sense, but die in a hurry, some day, with all my sensibilities in full expansion. Yet a week's added age brought so much caution and reflection with it, as made me burn this effusion. I will take very good care not to risk being supposed a flatterer. I am sensible the glow of my affections, and the rapidity of my ideas, might lead me to say too much on a subject where I am deeply interested, but thus far I am safe. I never praise any one for virtues the person is not generally allowed to possess; though I might not think it necessary to publish to the world where my friends were deficient or blameable. But I am in a fair way to do well, when I have already begun to digress and egotize. I congratulate you on the gleam of comfort which lights up the declining day of your valuable friend Mrs. Dunlop; whom I regard with a kind of affectionate reverence not entirely owing to her genius, or

her virtue either, but that she has some singular notions, in which I have the honour to share,—that she regards objects with indifference that I think unworthy of attention, and admires, where I admire. Poor Ned Mayne !* What an honourable death was his, and how worthy of his unspotted life. At first sight, there is something very aggravating in seeing a valuable member of society snatched away in the very act of risking his own life to save another,—often, as in this case, from a pure motive of humanity, without any tie of previous affection. Yet in the course of my little reading and observation, this case has occurred so often, that I am convinced they are summoned in the moment of glorious exertion, that they may be taken away from the evil to come, and escape the temptations that might degrade or sully virtue so exalted. I knew a little of poor Ned's father once, and pity him exceedingly. So I do Mrs. Trumball, whom I like better than any one I know so little, because she is so totally disinterested. She will suffer more than others, but she will enjoy more. It is a short shifting scene

.....

* Edward Mayne, son to Mayne of Powis in Stirlingshire, an excellent young man ; who, being on board the Queen Indiaman, which was burnt in the year 1779, in some port which I do not remember, as he, with others, were going into the boat, he recollected a passenger who was lying in one of the births below, and, being lame was unable to make his escape. This generous youth immediately returned, lifted the gentleman on his shoulder, and was carrying him upon deck, when the ship blew up, and they were both killed.

at best : those who live merely for themselves will quit it as soon as those who live for others ; but they will have fewer pleasing retrospects, and leave less regret behind them. It relieves me to hear you give testimony to the undiminished gratitude and attachment of our departed friend ; and I have no doubt of your keeping sacred a promise so solemnly asked and given, especially as the objects of it are not undeserving on their own account. What you say of her concluding sentiments is exactly what I should expect. Had it been otherwise, I should have no faith or trust in any thing human. I should indeed have been for ever haunted by the phantoms of inconsistency and insincerity ; though I should have had that best consolation, of leaving no duty unfulfilled, with regard to that much loved object of my long solicitude.

LETTER CVII.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH.

Laggan, Nov. 23, 1800.

DEAR MADAM,

I HOPED to have sent your goose to-day, but cannot. He and the two blue cheeses, however, will, I trust, soon find their way ; and with them receive an answer to part of your last letter.

I have not yet seen R. to hear how well *you* look, and how merry *you* are. My *mirth* and *beauty*, which he celebrates, are not much increased this fortnight, but, thank God, I am much better these two days. What is best, the whirlpool in my brain has in some measure subsided. Nay, I find the relapse to calm sorrow, a relief from constant perturbation, "*Tha solas an tuireadh le sith, Ach claidhidh fad thuirse soil doruin.*"* As I cannot cure the evil habit of quotation, you see I have changed ground, and taken shelter in another language; but Mr. M. will translate it, or "try what *translation* can, what it cannot." Yet what can it, when *he* cannot *translate*. This whimsical parody is not unmeaning, for the original is stronger, and softer than the sense can be given in our language. *Tuireadh* we must have, but O let it be *tuireadh le sith*! I make no doubt of what you say of our dear departed friend still hanging about your heart, and am sure she will continue to do so "while memory holds her seat." If this is your case, amidst affluence, prosperity, and various society, judge what must be mine, in the utter seclusion to which I now devote myself, —in a place where seven years residence had naturalized and domesticated Charlotte so much, that

.....

* This quotation from Ossian has been elegantly and not unfaithfully, translated by James Macpherson. It runs literally thus: "There is enjoyment in mourning with peace; yet long mourning wastes the children of calamity."

her image makes a part of every scene around me. Though the agitated state of my mind has for some time interrupted that kind of mystick intercourse which fancy delights to hold with the souls of the departed, I gratify myself by paying a kind of delicate homage to her memory, in shewing kindness to those she loved, and doing things that I think would please her. The most soothing retrospect I ever can have, is in recollecting the many conversations we have had together upon that awful futurity, which she has only entered on a little before us ; being, perhaps, prematurely ripened by a succession of sorrows such as few experience. My thoughts hover perpetually over the grave ; yet I trust in that infinite goodness which has hitherto supported me, that the gloomy prospect will be enlivened with some rays of hope and consolation. Speaking of those whom she regarded, her old friend Mr. Ewen, who is a sincere mourner, is returned from Sky, merely that he may die in this country ; and, no doubt, that his last days may be spent near that once happy cottage, which was a central refuge for affliction, before it was darkened by successive sorrows. - - - I hope they will, at all events, respect themselves, and preserve their own esteem. It signifies little, when the short chapter closes, in what class one has stood : the great matter is, to have been near the head of that class. I would rather be the first of peasants, than the last of kings ; besides, the darker we find our prospects

here, the more diligently we explore the light that leads to heaven. May that light shine on you, and comfort you, when all other comforts fail. So wishes

Your friend.

LETTER CVIII.

TO MRS. BROWN.

Laggan, Jan. 26, 1801.

MY DEAR MRS. BROWN,

I TOOK your last letter very kindly indeed, though my long delay in answering appears rather against me. This *young* family of mine, which seems destined to be ever young and ever growing, engrosses me more than ever, as I grow more than ever indifferent about other matters of this world. Not that I love my children better than formerly, but I love other things less. And though I have not, as yet, made any extraordinary progress in that easy and pleasant science of self-love, I still love myself so well as to fly the approaches of despondency, whom I consider as cousin-german to despair; and the best mere earthly refuge I know, is constant earnest employment. Yet I could contrive to find time to write, if I could find spirits; but all the melancholy events of the last year, with their more mel-

ancholy consequences, did so overwhelm me, when I endeavoured to write to any one whom I knew to be conscious of my feelings, that I shrunk from what used to be my consolation. My heart has been so softened, so melted by distress, that I feel more than ever the kindness of my few remaining friends. I cling to them in idea with a stronger grasp. The value you express for my correspondence, and the sense you retain of our long endeared intimacy, is a cordial to my sick heart. I am cheered by the reflection, how much Providence has suited the kind and degree of comfort, allotted to me, to my taste and inclination ; indulging my love of freedom and tranquillity, and giving me a warm interest in so many worthy hearts, and making those, with which mine was most intimately blended, all I could wish. Without this, the world would have been a desert to me, and all its most envied enjoyments splendid trifles. You will rejoice to hear, after all the sorrows and sad privations I have suffered, that I have an increasing stock of comfort in my children.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Such have been my comforts under this illness. How many, many languish in vain, amidst splendor and affluence, for these high peculiar blessings, that can only be given or received by minds of a certain description. How are Mr. Brown's monarchical spirits supported under the triumphs

of the great consul ? We are here all in sackcloth and ashes. I did not give myself credit for so much publick spirit as this occasion has called forth. My blood really chilled with horror and anguish. Alas, for the poor Swiss ! I fancy the wits of all your politicians are sharpened by hunger. We are better off than most of our neighbours. Our crop, I hope, will feed us till the new one comes. I wrote to your sister about a commission of rice for the Duke's tenants, which I thought your brother might procure. We long to hear from you. Mr. G. joins cordially, in every good wish to you and yours, with your affectionate friend.

LETTER CIX.

TO MRS. MACINTOSH, GLASGOW.

Laggan, Dec. 17, 1801.

DEAR MADAM,

IF sympathy could alleviate the greatest of possible calamities, mine might be softened by the sincere and tender compassion of my friends, which is beyond what I could have hoped. Yours I believe to be not only sincere, but very painful. Willingly would I lessen your pain by shewing you how Divine mercy has enabled me to sooth my own. The storm of adversity has indeed been

let loose upon me, and shattered my fabrick of happiness ; so frequent, so heavy were the shocks, that it is no wonder I lay stunned among the ruins. But I have not abandoned myself to sinful despair ; I am gathering up the fragments to build a little hovel, where I may live the appointed time on hope and recollection, and then die in peace. I will not describe my sorrows ; I will not tell you that when half my heart was torn away, the other half ached at the separation. All this you must know, for you too have a heart. But you have been too prosperous, to know how minds, not elegant, are endeared to each other by retirement, and sharing sorrows and difficulties. But I meant to tell you my resolutions. Pecuniary evils I neither feel nor fear. God is all sufficient, and my trust in him unlimited.

* * * * *

Dear madam, what right have I to repine, when the time must needs be so short till the period that reunites us ? In the mean time, I will hover round his remains as long as I possibly can. I cannot at this time write longer, or I would tell you how indulgent the Duke has been, in permitting me to continue somewhat longer on the farm, at the old rate. Our affairs were in much better condition than could be expected, considering my husband's liberal spirit and numerous burdens. No friend need take the trouble of a long journey on my account ; my cousin, Capt. R., and our neighbour Clergyman, have volunteered their as-

sistance, which will be quite sufficient. God bless you both !

Your concern about the pension, expected for the widows of chaplains, is very kind indeed. Mr. G.'s agent will inquire about it: if others get it, I shall. I have no peculiar claim.

LETTER CX.

TO MISS DUNBAR,* BOATH.

Laggan, Jan. 1, 1802.

DEAR MADAM,

SO young, and such a novice in sorrow, you have not yet learnt the weakness, the extreme languor, into which the mind sinks when the first violent bursts are over ; incapable of raising itself to the true source of consolation, and ready to lean on every reed. In this state sympathy is most availing, and in this hopeless and dispirited state your letter found me. - - - Why then apologize for what excites my warmest gratitude ? Your dear worthy mother and you I have long known and esteemed, through the medium of your humble friend. This proof of your goodness

.....

* This and some following letters were written in answer to one Miss Dunbar had, at her mother's desire, addressed to the author, condoling with her on the loss she had recently sustained.

to so great a stranger, convinces me that you are all I have been taught to imagine you. You wish to know how I bear the sudden shock of this calamity. I bore it wonderfully, considering how very much I had to lose. Still, at times, the Divine Goodness supports me in a manner I scarcely dared to hope. Happily for me, anxiety for a numerous orphan family, and the wounding smiles of an infant, too dear to be neglected, and too young to know what he has lost, divide my sorrows, and do not suffer my mind to be wholly engrossed by this dreadful privation, this chasm that I shudder to look into. A daughter, of all daughters the most dutiful and affectionate, in whom her father still lives, (so truly does she inherit his virtues, and all the amiable peculiarities of his character) this daughter is wasting away with secret sorrow, while, "in smiles, she hides her grief to soften mine." - - - - -

I was too much a veteran in affliction, and too sensible of the arduous task devolved upon me, to sit down in unavailing sorrow, overwhelmed by an event which ought to call forth double exertion. None, indeed, was ever at greater pains to console another, than I was to muster up every motive for action, every argument for patient suffering. No one could say to me, "the loss is common;" few, very few indeed, had so much happiness to lose. To depict a character so very uncommon, so little obvious to common observers, who loved and revered without comprehending

him, would be difficult for a steadier hand than mine. With a kind of mild disdain, and philosophick tranquillity, he kept aloof from a world, for which the delicacy of his feelings, the purity of his integrity, and the intuitive discernment with which he saw into character, in a manner disqualified him, that is, from enjoying it ; for who can enjoy the world without deceiving or being deceived ? But recollections crowd on me, and I wander. I say, to be all the world to this superior mind, to constitute his happiness for twenty years, now vanished like a vision ; to have lived with unabated affection together even thus long, when a constitution, delicate as his mind, made it unlikely that even thus long we should support each other through the paths of life ! - - - - -

- - - - - What are difficulties, when shared with one whose delighted approbation gives one spirits to surmount them ? Then to hear from every mouth his modest unobtrusive merit receive its due tribute of applause ; to see him still in his dear children, now doubly dear ; and to know that such a mind cannot perish, cannot suffer ; nay, through the infinite merits of that Redeemer, in whom he trusted, enjoys what we cannot conceive—dear Miss Dunbar, believe me, I would not give my tremulous hopes, and pleasing sad retrospections, for any other person's happiness ! Forgive this ; it is like the overflowing of the heart to an intimate ; but your pity opens every source of anguish and of tenderness. Assure

your kind mother of my grateful esteem ; and believe me, with sincere regard, much yours.

LETTER CXI.

TO MRS. F—R.

Laggan, Jan. 12, 1802.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE perused your affectionate letter again and again ; but, how shall I answer it ? Day after day, week after week, I have deferred, in hopes of a serene hour. To you, I could pour out my heart, and from you expect the sympathy this cold world has not to bestow. But two things I see clearly ; that mine is a growing sorrow, like other streams, widening as it proceeds ; and that I am utterly incapable of arranging my thoughts at present : one overpowering recollection absorbs every thing - - - - - Now that I have gone through this bitter narrative,* you will be sensible how sudden, yet how aggravated, the stroke has been. Very delicate he was all summer, and much enfeebled, in consequence of his illness last spring. However, it was a delightful summer ; we had got matters arranged to our satisfaction, and shook off some embarrassments that had arisen from the expense of enclosing, improving, &c.

.....
 * This narrative is here omitted.

Our farm was well regulated, and productive in consequence. Bell came home, and her improvement, in every sense, afforded us great pleasure. In short from different favourable turns with regard to our children and our affairs, we were relieved from many anxieties which had preyed on his delicate and sensible spirit. We were indeed all cheerfulness, harmony, and peace, enjoying the highest domestick comfort, and the most pleasing prospect of a calm evening of life. He was delightfully pleasant; I never saw him enjoy himself and his family more. A boy, the most promising one, the greatest tie I have now to life, was sent us for a comfort when my dear John was taken away, and was the charm and amusement of this last fatal year. I never saw his fondness carried to such a pitch, though he treated all of them with the most endearing tenderness. My dearest Nancy, were I to choose so long a period to live over again, at any time of my life, I think it would be the very half year, the close of which swallowed up my hopes of earthly happiness. - - - - - I will not torture myself with particulars. I had not ten minutes warning; it was a thunderstroke. Yet if sudden, it was comparatively easy; the doctor was not alarmed till the last half hour. I cannot either leave off or go on. - - - - - I thank God, no one can have better children. My friends, too, seem disposed to do all that can possibly alleviate what is incurable. The Duke* humanely indulges

.

* The present Duke of Gordon.

me in keeping the farm in the old way, till the period when it shall be found expedient for me to leave it. Our affairs are in better order than you could expect, when you consider a man so charitable and generous with so large a family. My intention is to hover round his remains here as long as I can ; and when I remove, it shall be to a town. You will hear something of me hereafter, that will surprise you, yet not more than it has done myself.

* * * * *

LETTER CXII.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, April 24, 1802.

DEAR MADAM,

I WROTE a hasty scrawl to accompany the poetical fugitives you wished for, which I sent to *Barr*, to be forwarded ; but *Barr*, “ whose meaner stars have shut her up in wishes,” has every inclination, but no power to transmit the important packet. So I must brandish the quill once more, though scarce able to lift it ; for I have been for ten days past sick, spiritless, forlorn, and dejected. I am no whiner, and love my friends too well to inflict my sufferings upon them, when I suffer moderately. Indeed, when I do not positively suffer, I do positively enjoy ; for which

reason, it is more peculiarly my duty to suffer patiently, and enjoy gratefully. Now you will reasonably expect a definition of what I call enjoyment. It is, when the sensibilities of my heart are excited, and find objects worthy of them : it is, when I can meditate in peace, and return to my first love, the fair face of nature, with serene complacency ; at times heightened into an enthusiasm equally tender and solemn : it is when I can indulge recollections that exalt my mind while they soften it : it is when my sorrows are asleep, lulled by the cheering smiles of playful infancy, or the easy artless conversation of the young, the innocent, and the affectionate. I say nothing of the humanizing muse, her ladyship having, at times, a great propensity to point the stings of pain, and being, at best, but a capricious comforter. Now you must needs be tired of egotism ; but who such egotists as the sick and sorrowful ? and what so improving to the young, the gay, and prosperous, as to know how suffering may be endured, to know the ingredients of that wholesome, though unpalatable cup, of which we must all drink by turns ! I owe you, after your patient endurance of this homily, some lighter theme. I must tell you the origin of the song Mary improperly called a translation. You must know, that, in the progress of Highland society, there was a kind of intermediate state ; to which a good deal of pleasing, fanciful poetry owes its origin. But then it is so local, so peculiar, so

untranslatable, 'tis absolute salvolatile. The heroick age, as you well know, was entirely divided betwixt war and the chace. Love, in such an age, appears not in a voluptuous or *seducing* form. Man, always born to suffer and to mourn, then suffered more severely, and mourned more deeply. Love was a solemn, serious passion, interwoven with the ruling one of heroick achievement. A man loved his mistress much the better, that he had obtained her by some warlike exploit, and mourned her loss the more, as it was generally attended with that of his far greater idol, honour. He often won her by war, and supported her by hunting. This inferior war gave scope to those pursuits, that elevated their minds into that sublime melancholy with which their love, their poetry, and their musick, were so strongly tingured. When their extravagant and restless knight-errantry had almost occasioned the extinction of the Fingalian race of heroes, a new tribe appeared, more industrious and less enterprising; in short, the pastoral age commenced; and the first tenders of cattle were regarded by heroick bards, and lovelorn maids, (who were of course musical and poetical,) as a degenerate race, who had not spirit or ability to encounter the hazards and fatigues of a life of hunting. These are the sons of little men, so contemptuously spoken of, and indeed considered as the idle and cowardly part of the community. However, the tide of property and consequence changing, that preju-

dice changed with it ; the muse deserted to the pastoral vale, and maidens began to boast the peaceful plenty of their lovers' folds, and describe their herds and flocks with rapture. Others, again, praised the valour of their hunters, the wild variety of their pursuits, and the sylvan scenery they traced in search of their game. The authoress of the sweet wild strain Crochallin, provoked to emulation, extols her Colin's herds and flocks, and ascribes singular properties to them. They require no fold, no herd, no restraint. She dwells with delight on their beauty and swiftness.

"O where are thy flocks, that so lightly rebound,
And fly o'er the heath without touching the ground ?
So beauteous, so varied, so dappled their hue,
So agile, so graceful, so charming to view.
In all the wide forest, sure nought can appear,
Like the flocks of my Colin, my hunter, my dear."

All ends in the discovery, that her lover was a hunter ; and the animals, whose beauty and vivacity she had been admiring, were deer, roes, and fawns. This I some time ago transfused (for translate I could not) into English for Mr. Thomson.* I have been tedious, and feel myself the better for being so, but am tired. To-morrow

.....
* George Thomson of Edinburgh, the friend of Burns and of the author, whose letters to the Ayrshire bard appear in the correspondence published by Dr. Currie. Crochallin, as translated by the author, is included in the fourth volume of Mr. Thomson's Collection of Scottish Musick.

night I will spur myself up to be tedious again, and answer all your queries with regard to Burns. Good night. Sleep be upon thine eyes, peace in thy breast !

LETTER CXIII.

TO MISS DUNBAR.

Laggan, April 25, 1802.

NOW I have to satisfy you as to my favourite poem of Burns. Doubtless the Daisy is the most finished, and excels in simple elegance ; " The De'il himsel" in humour, exquisite, peculiar humour. I confess, if decorous people could be reconciled to blackguardism, John Hornbook is the very emperor of blackguards. Only think of that despotick power over the fancy, which oan unite, what the creative Shakspeare himself never united, the terrible and the ludicrous. Yet, where Death is personified meeting the bard, I am sure you would laugh, if you were not afraid. The same power re-appears in " Tam of Shanter," which I allow to possess superior excellence, though not the very sort of excellence most to my taste. But if you talk of my very own taste, I find myself quite at home in " The Epistle to Davy," and " The Saturday's Even." The latter, indeed, draws aid from the true source of the

sublime and beautiful in composition, the sacred Scriptures. The epistles have a strength of thought, with a playful ease of expression, a mixture of sound sense and sportive gaiety, which is really delightful. The "Auld Farmer to his Mare Maggy" is a very great favourite. "The Lament" has more nerve in it than all the love-laments I ever saw put together. Then the songs—what a wilderness of sweets is there, and how puzzling is choice among such contending beauties! I, who delight in Scotch landscape and simple pathos, overlook songs richer in poetry, to shelter under the bard's plaid:

"O wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidy to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee."

Or

"Wander wi Jean in yon glen of green bracken,
Where the burnie steals under the lang yellow broom."

If I could indeed resist the soft attraction of

"O wha is she that loe's me,
And has my heart in keeping?
O sweet is she that loe's me,
Like dew in summer weeping,
In tears the rose-buds steeping," &c. &c.

If ever you know, as well as I do, what it is to have your heart wrung with agony,

"On the past too fondly pondering,
O'er the hopeless future wandering,"

you will feel the force of Isabella's complaint:

"Raving winds around her blowing," &c. &c.

Hear the true language of despair :

“ Life, thou soul of every blessing,
Load to mis’ry most distressing,
O how gladly I’d resign thee,
And to dark oblivion join thee !”

In extreme bitterness of soul we all should say this, if we knew how. One more elysian flower from this rich wreath, and I have done.

“ And wear thou this,” she solemn said,
And plac’d the holly on my head.—
Its polish’d leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play,
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

Let the doors of the temple of fancy be for ever barred on those, who can read this without turning, involuntarily, to gaze on vacancy, and start-ling at the rustling leaves, when Coila flies “ in light away.”

LETTER CXIV.

TO MISS DANBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, May 4, 1802.

I NOW hasten to your queries. I cannot tell you how much I admire and despise Peter.*

.....
* Peter Pindar, a witty, but low, and mischievous writer of verses.

He is every way original, and most original in this respect ; that I know not that ever any other object at once excited my contempt and admiration. His humour is most peculiar, most unaffected, most irresistible. Yet, for what end Providence entrusted a weapon so dangerous in the hands of one who avows his disregard to every thing sacred and venerable, is very difficult for us to conjecture. I am the more fully convinced of the bad tendency of his writings, from the amusement I derive from them, fore-armed as I am by a disgust at his want of principle and decency. Bozzy and Piozzi, however, is above praise and beyond censure : there the satire is so just, so pointed, so characteristic, that one can laugh without self-reproach. The Lousiad, however, I regard with a mixture of contempt and disgust. Burlesque spun out so long is loathsome ; 'tis a farce of five acts. Besides, to make royal weaknesses, should they even exist, a subject for ridicule, I think immoral as well as impolitick. This scandalous licence would be intolerable, though we were not, as now, ruled by a virtuous and exemplary prince. It is necessary for the good of society that we venerate our rulers, unless they oppress us by tyranny, or shew a corrupting example. Whoever applies a magnifying glass to every speck of human infirmity, shakes the main pillars that support government, the love and respect people have for their rulers ; and this is laughing at too great an expense. - - -

I greatly admire the songs of Burns you mention; Jessey is exquisite. But my selection was from songs not so generally popular, but which have, to my taste, transcendent merit. From songs to singing the transition is easy, which leads to another of your queries. All my young people love musick, but only those inherit their father's fine taste and passable voice, who are so happy as to resemble him otherwise. These are - - - and - - -. D— too has a very fine voice and ear. Musical talents we could not afford to cultivate. Paying the shoemaker's account for such a host is a serious affair. M— has, in most things, a very good taste. You may depend more on it than mine, ever blinded, as I am, by partiality. She thinks you have made the most of your subject; but it is not a happy one; nothing very lively or very tender naturally arising from it, giving no room either for pathos or gaiety. Your lines on your brother's return, which she met within one of — written books, delighted her; so elegant, easy, and tender. You would be vain if you knew what so calm a critick thought of them. You dazzle and overpower one with Miss Frazer's character. I think I, too, would indulge her favourite propensity, if I had scope for it. Improving the face of nature I had almost called a divine amusement. She, who has made the desert to blossom as the rose, is the benefactress of the unborn as well as of her contemporaries. I was ready to cry out, on reading your description of

her, " Lady, you are the cruellest she alive, if you will lead those graces to the grave, and leave the world no copy." Perhaps the lady might answer from the same author, " I will not be over-mastered by a valiant piece of clay," &c.

I have left no room for acknowledging your generous and highly successful exertions on my account, but I am run away with by Miss Frazer. I do feel a little exalted at knowing there are such women in the world. Remember me in all kindness to your unequalled mother. Adieu.

LETTER CXV.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, June 26, 1802.

MY DEAR, KIND HELEN,

* * * * *

There, now, is the requested freedom, which, as you justly observe, ought to exist between those whose *affinity of soul* is felt, and claimed by each. Besides, my matronly character, years, &c. entitle me to treat you, if not maternally, a little *auntishly*. I need not, indeed, take much maternal consequence to myself, for, with my grown-up daughters, I live like an elder sister. But now to my delay. Your last letter, inspired by the very soul

of warm, young, active friendship, would have charmed me in the perusal, though I were not, myself, the obliged and grateful object of that friendship. But, before I answer it, I must tell you, that I have just parted with two friends whom I may never meet again, and who have been both very useful in supporting my spirits during this period of calamity. The preparations for their departure have not only engrossed, but overpowered me. One is the book of books*, the revisal of which had almost turned the brain of brains before it was completed. The other is the daughter of daughters, who is now on her way to England, and has left me under much depression. But, resolved not to yield to it, many a hard battle have I fought with despondency, and often, as now, have I been playful, for fear of being doleful. If I had not a firm reliance on Providence inwardly, and an active mind, that impels and enlivens my struggles outwardly, how could I still exist, after the hard pulls my heart-strings have had? The motives, &c. of this journey I shall explain hereafter, for I never could narrate when my head ached. We spent "one day of parting love," as Burns says, at Dalwhinny, from which her young cousins, Isabella, and I returned to-day. I took refuge in my haunt in the deep dell, where the Bronnach dashes impetuously over its rocky channel;

.....

* This alludes to a volume of poems, written by the author of these letters, and since published.

there I scrawled a few lines with a pencil, which I will retrace and enclose for your perusal. But the meaning of this effusion connects so closely with the scenery, that, without a commentary by that *cool critick* Barr, you will not half taste it. Let her paint the landscape which she has so often seen (and felt); let her tell you how the Bronnach is born in the recesses of the Corry buy*, very near Charlotte's beautiful fountain. From this kindred stream it diverges, and turns its course towards our cottage, before it descends from the eminence under which we are sheltered. Never, sure, in a quarter of a mile's course, did a mountain-brook assume such various aspects, and speak such different languages. Turbulent and hoarse, it first descends, over rocks and great stones, through the deep chasm which its wintry tumults have formed in the steep descent; when it reaches the house, close to which it passes, the channel is stony, but not abrupt; its murmurs are still loud, but regular and not unpleasing; a little further on, it runs over smooth pebbles. Its borders are verdant, and its sound equal and almost musical. Presently after, it enters a meadow, rich and flowery beyond all compare, fertilized by the overflowing of Spey, beautiful with luxuriant herbage, and diversified by the windings of this wandering stream, which becomes here a perfect meander,

.....

* Corry buy is a name applied to a large verdant hollow, something like the crater of a volcano, near the summit of a mountain. It means, literally, yellow or flowery bosom.

circling round so often, that it seems inclined to revisit its source. Its brink affords shelter, amidst the tufted flowers, to an incredible number of larks ; and its channel in this rich mould is so deep, that the sound is softer and sweeter than any other stream. When I walked alone, to indulge sorrow, I always went up the stream. How many tranquil evenings have I traced its wanderings through the meadows, with those, who, alas ! will never more share my peaceful enjoyments ! But now to the purpose.

LINES ADDRESSED TO THE BRONNACH.

A small stream that descends from the mountains in a remote part of the Highlands.

Rude stream, that com'st dashing the wild rocks among,
And drown'st in thy tumults the pastoral song,
How oft thy hoarse clamours have soften'd my care,
When pining with anguish, or sunk in despair !
When nature lay hush'd in oblivious repose,
When nothing was waking but I and my woes ;
When the stars all beheld me with bright eyes of fire,
And bade me resign, and their Author admire ;
Then, where by my cottage thy turbulent course,
Like sorrow subsiding, diminish'd its force,
When the heart, overburden'd, could seek for relief,
Thy murmurs how placid, how soothing to grief !
When morn in fresh beauty enlighten'd the skies,
When the sun was preparing in splendour to rise,
Among the smooth pebbles, in melody clear,
Smooth gliding, thy waters more lucid appear.
But when in the meadows, at ev'ning's soft hours,
On thy borders I wander, 'midst verdure and flow'rs,

Where, hid in thy channel, in whispers so sweet,
 Thou art heard in a cadence for sympathy meet ;
 My musings, tho' pensive, are free from despair,
 While soothing, I feel the soft balm of the air ;
 When from thy low banks, they ascend to the sky,
 My soul seems to follow the larks where they fly.
 When the sun from the west, with a soft parting ray,
 Irradiates thy stream, where it mingles with Spey,
 While to seek the wide ocean thy pure waters roll,
 How sad, yet how tranquil the calm of my soul !
 The stream that with thee in the mountains arose,
 In whose dark recesses your sources disclose,
 Whose parting thy murmurs lament all the way,
 Tho' forc'd from beside thee so early to stray,
 Now again shall rejoin thee, and flow in one tide,
 Nor part till to ocean together you glide :
 How blest, who arrive at that sea without shore,
 Where currents rejoin, to be sunder'd no more !

 LETTER CXVI.

TO MISS MAXWELL PAGAN, BOSTON.

Laggan, Aug. 4, 1802.

MY DEAR MAXWELL,

I WILL by no means delay answering
 your kind letter, though it costs me a greater ef-
 fort than you are aware of ; for I have really got
 a surfeit of writing of late. First, that tiresome
 collection* which I had to arrange for the press ;

.....

* A volume of poetry, before alluded to.

and now with answering letters which I had been obliged to defer till that task was concluded. Of these letters what shall I say? I wish you did but see them. Of more than forty, moderately speaking, which I received on a late melancholy occasion, not one speaks *the cant* of condolence. Some of them are from people I never saw, though I know them well, through the medium of mutual friends; others from *lang syne* acquaintance, by whom I thought myself entirely forgotten. Some of these epistles are singularly elegant, some piously affecting, some simply pathetick; but it is very singular, that, among so many, there should not be one studied or affected expression, or one hackneyed phrase. They all breathe, in various tones, the genuine language of feeling and compassion for the living, of esteem and veneration for the departed. All this tender regret, for modest worth, hid, during the short pilgrimage of life, in obscurity; all this amiable sympathy, for orphans, some of them too young to know the extent of their misfortune, and for their unhappy mother sinking in an unheard of corner, under the depression of narrow circumstances, accumulated cares, and an enfeebled constitution—form a powerful body of evidence against the prevailing notion, that every creature acts from some selfish or sordid motive, and that vanity or interest are the sole actuating principles. Behold, here are so many who have not bowed the knee to Baal, who are not entirely swayed by that

6

world, which is at perpetual enmity with its Maker. What motives, but the purest and the best, could any one have for taking so warm an interest in those, who could promote no one's advantage, and gratify no one's vanity?

We have had letters from M. since her arrival in England, and even since she went to Devonshire. Her journey, which was full of novelty and amusement, and which, as far as possible, she has shared with us by her description, was rendered more safe and agreeable by the company of a particular friend of mine, a clergyman, who, being obliged to make an excursion for his health, accompanied her to London, and on to Sidmouth, a watering-place, where she found her new friends, together with some others of their family. The elegance of their manners, and the cordiality of her reception, exceeded even her expectations, which had been highly raised by their previous correspondence. Here I must wave the true and entertaining of her travels, to recite something more extraordinary than any thing that occurred to her observation in that world of wonders, London itself, during her short stay in it.

* * * * *

I have not left room to tell you of the goodness of Divine Providence, as it appears manifested to the children of a worthy man, in the kind and considerate attention of many to their affairs. Know me always

Yours truly.

LETTER CXVII.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, Oct. 5, 1802.

MY DEAR HELEN,

YOUR return from Aberdeenshire was matter of consolation to me, on various accounts. My two great props, the book of books and M., being taken away at once, I fell into a relapse of despondency ; the image, which must ever live in my heart, and dwell in my meditations, entirely engrossed me, to the exclusion or diminution of every other concern ! I never sleep much ; but, during this “double gloom of nature and of soul,” I know only the painful transition from deep dejection to severe anxiety ; and, when exhausted by the labour of the mind, I sunk into a state that more resembled a heavy torpor than refreshing slumber. I waked with a sudden start, before the dawn, to horror inexpressible. Yet I never took more pains to sooth a sick infant, than I did to reason down the throbbings of unconquerable anguish. All the singular instances of the Divine goodness, which have shone upon me since I was left alone in the world, I have made to pass in review before me, and reproached myself for sinking while thus supported. Were you ever struck with an affecting instance of the true sublime in the Old Testament ?* it is where Moses, as it

.....
* Exodus, xxxiii. 18, 19.

should seem, encouraged by being admitted into so near communion with the Deity, entreats that He would shine forth upon him in full resplendence :

“ Lord shew me thy glory.” — — “ I will make all my goodness to pass before thee.”

What an answer ! how condescending its beneficence, how rich its meaning ! How cold must be the heart that does not make the suitable comment on this emphatical definition of true glory ! Confess now that I do not use either to lament or preach to you. “ The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith.” I do not mean to cloud the gayest thoughts of gayest age, where there is so much reason to believe it an innocent and warrantable gaiety ; and I know too much of the source, from whence you draw your instruction, to believe it in my power to make any valuable addition to it. But, sometimes, the overcharged heart will seek in sympathy an alleviation, where there is no hope of cure. Your late indisposition and depression will make all this intelligible to you. I can assure you my concern and apprehension about A. L. was one of my terrors ; and, through the gloomy medium in which I beheld all objects of fear, you yourself, you were another of my disturbers. Judge, then, whether I was glad when I got your letter, and whether I was grateful when I saw with what alacrity you went in search of A. L. ; and how determined you were to think the best of her. I don't know

whether I remarked to you before, that I never knew a creature who enjoys, in a higher degree, that

“Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind,”

which Pope gives to his vestals. She goes on rejoicing in her course all day, and every day ; and this without animal spirits,—mere cheerfulness of heart. I am happy to hear your Aberdeenshire *jauntee*, as Burns calls it, has been so serviceable to you. You have been quite in high life, where I should not like to have been with you ; for early did I say,

“Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you.”

But perhaps you will call this sour grapes ; not quite, neither ; I love elegance in sentiment, in language, in manners, though I don't care for the externals and insignia of it, nor can I bear it at all when disjoined from simplicity. Artifice, spleen, vanity, and false refinement, are the demons by which the upper regions of life are haunted. Must I confess that grossness, vulgarity, and indelicacy puddle about like pigs and ducks in the lower world ? We made a little world to ourselves, where ease, simplicity, and a kind of negative elegance, gave an undefineable charm to our cottage. This made people of genuine feeling and uncultured taste like it, without being able to tell why. Sweet cottage ! must I leave it ? I will tell you, some time or other, how our poppies and convolvulusses nod into the low windows, and how richly the woodbine clothes the porch, where we have

so often sat together, contemplating a mild showery evening, that would let us go no further. But what does this avail ? I don't mean all this to detract from the merits of Miss Frazer's elegance, which, I doubt not, is regulated by her taste, as well as dignified by her virtues. Is Lord Lyttelton son or grandson to the virtuous and poetical nobleman of that title ? The verses he left at Castle Fraser, are sweetly turned. I give you joy of having "the dark rider of the wave" for an inmate ; he will make a frigate of the house, in which the BRAMIN will be midshipman, you first lieutenant, and your mother master and commander. He will be an animating acquisition. I think, brothers are the only possessions I ever envied any one. For more than twenty years, the sense of this desideratum was effaced, but now I feel it more than ever. How rich are you in these enviable relations ;—a mother that is sister and friend, as well as guide and monitress ; and peace and leisure ; and musick and literature ; and taste and health ; and sense to set the just value on all these blessings ; and sympathy to keep your feelings from hardening in prosperity. Look round now, and see if there is any so happy. I leave you to the grateful contemplation of all these blessings. Adieu, Felicia ! - - -

I am sorry I mentioned ——'s eulogium of you ; a consciousness of that kind is destructive of ease of intimacy, and 'tis agreeable to be on an easy footing with a rational man who expects nothing,

- - - -

LETTER CXVIII.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, Oct. 20, 1802.

ONCE more, my dear Helen (and then farewell for a while) give me your pity and your prayers. Your dear mother whom I love and revere unseen, will give me her's. I will anticipate no evils ; but ask the Divine aid to frame my mind to something between hope and resignation, while I leave this groupe of orphans, loving and beloved as they are, to attend the sick bed of one, whom absence and calamity have made best and dearest in my eyes for the present. I cannot now narrate ; but her recovery from a slow nervous fever is so dubious and unlikely, that Mrs. P—, obliged to leave home by an urgent call of similar distress, wishes, before she sets out, to have one of M.'s relations from Scotland, to attend her. I am the fittest to undertake this task. My anxiety would be doubled, if either of her sisters went alone in diligences at this season. * * * is too timid and too delicate. * * * has an arduous charge of various concerns, and feels too strongly to act properly among strangers, in such a trying emergency. I had your letter last night. It would give me pleasure if any thing could ; but my chief comfort just now is to recollect promises of divine consolation and support from Him who will not afflict above measure.

“ With the Patriarch’s trust,
Thy call I follow to a land unknown.”

This passage of Young runs in my head like the prevalent idea in a delirium. I shall bewilder you as well as myself, by leading you into the howling wilderness through which my mind wanders. Only this, let not poor Anne Ourry know of the impending cloud, or my departure. - - - - - I am glad you and dear Mr. Mackay like her so well. Her’s is the milder merit of the heart ; but such a spotless heart, and a temper so unclouded !—In the depth of despondency I sometimes lay hold of a ludicrous idea to play with ; such is that of your house being turned to a frigate. Don’t mistake me. I know your brother* is no *mer-man*. Nautical skill as a man of science, and the resolute manliness of his profession, are, in his case, I am told, blended with easy manners, and an improved mind. No longer whimsical or sportive, behold me a suppliant for a life dearer than my own, and shivering with fearful expectation. May every blessing attend you !

.....
* James Dunbar, Esq. who commands His Majesty’s ship the *Astrea*.

LETTER CXIX.

TO MISS. DUNBAR, BOATH.

Glasgow, Nov. 7, 1802.

MY DEAR, KIND HELEN,

WORN as I am by the pressure of many sorrows, divided as I am between necessary occupation and many visits of sympathy which I receive, can I go to England, and remain for a time in dread suspense so far from you, without bidding you farewell, without expressing my gratitude for all your kindness to Ourry, so amply detailed, and so warmly commented on, by that paragon of grateful damsels? I hope this will find you in some degree recovered from the indisposition she lamented so much. Perhaps the time may arrive, after all these clouds are overblown, when I may, from the occurrences of my journey, and short stay in Edinburgh, furnish out an amusing detail; but now "chaos is come again,"—at least in my brain.—Since writing the above, I have witnessed a very impressive scene; it was the departure of a young lady who resided in my father's house for some time past. Her father had been chaplain to a settlement abroad, and left her in easier circumstances than generally happen to the children of Levi. She only meant to stay a few weeks at my father's, on her way to the north, where her friends live. There she was arrested by sickness,

her lungs being in a decayed state before ; and there she has been since June last, lingering a life that might well be called a protracted death ; C—, in the mean time, doing all in the power of compassionate attention to alleviate her sufferings. At Edinburgh, I heard that Mary was so much better, that I needed not proceed. I gave up my intention, yet thought, as I was so near, I would see my parents, and arrange my Stirlingshire establishment. I wrote to Mary, that if she felt a wish for my coming, here I was, and there I would go. Now, while I sat in security, and moreover heard from Mrs. Protheroe that she was walking out, I began to breathe a little ; when another letter informed me that her frequent relapses, and the danger of her lungs, made it necessary for her to remove to the hot wells, unless she soon grew better. The agony it cost me to relinquish my intention of returning to the dear family I have left, is unspeakable, but it must be. I should have gone yesterday, but could not forsake this poor dying girl. Last night she expired, and O how forlorn and friendless ! No creature to bestow a tear on her departure, but ourselves. Why do I enlarge thus, or who can understand the state of my mind ? Yet let me, in this wounding exigency, do justice to the unwearied kindness, the tender sympathy I receive. Who ever needed, who ever met with so much ? All this is incoherence, but we must lay our account to suffer as well as enjoy with our friends. 'Tis a proud pre-

eminence, and worth buying at a high price, to be a friend. I entreat your worthy mother's prayers ; I know how you will mourn over the dear children I leave behind. Adieu, my dear Helen ; I will write to you when I am more at ease. Peace be with you !

LETTER CXX.

TO MRS. F—R, PLYMTON.

*Bristol, Hotwell-House,**Dec. 14, 1802.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CAN hardly reproach myself for a delay, which elicited from you such a proof of warm unchanged affection. How gratifying are these lively marks of kindness, when the heart, stripped of its wonted shelter, languishes in a strange land, chilled and forlorn. I have now the comfort to acquaint you, that the benefit Mary receives from these waters, is beyond my hopes, so that her recovery seems nearly completed. This is wonderful, for there was so great an inflammation on her chest, that the doctor says were it not that she has a most excellent constitution, he should have entertained little hopes of her. I was treated with all possible kindness where I was, and owe more than I can express for sympathy and atten-

tion. Yet it is a great relief, in my present state of life, to be here at liberty. Without the uneasy sensation of disturbing the quiet, and poisoning the comfort of those who are deservedly happy, I would wish my comforts to be shared as much as possible with my friends; but my sorrows and anxieties I would keep as much as possible to myself. This, sure enough, is a beautiful, dismal place; but though the mind were not like mine, overloaded, I wonder how people can taste pleasure where death haunts you in so many forms, that you seem to have entered his vestibule. The number of the young and prosperous that appear drooping like faded flowers about these "sacred springs!" and then to see the vapid, futile phantoms, in the form of nervous, splenetick, and hectick women of fashion, settling their card parties, and talking over their winnings, at the very pump, and in the very presence of the poor wretches for whom the grave is visibly opening! I cannot tell you how I am shocked at these incursions, that vanity is hourly making into the precincts of mortality. The crowds who elicit gaiety from each other, have the opposite effect on me. Accustomed to walk complacently round the narrow circle of those whom I knew and loved, I am not cheered or amused by the crowd here. It only impresses more forcibly on my mind how many are here that regard me with indifference or contempt, and how great the change. I am so cheered when our kind friends from Bristol come to ask for us!

but that cannot often be. I have, however, the very best accounts of the little flock at home, and hear my deputy matron does wonders. When a burden is laid on such young shoulders, there are generally great complaints ; but my young heroine conquers difficulties with all imaginable ease. Indeed she commands tried and faithful forces. For, as every thing I have, you know, must needs be extraordinary, no one has such faithful and attached servants. Of this I have had many proofs ; and in the depth of my calamity, it was a consolation to me to see, that the kindness of a most indulgent master had produced so much gratitude. I love to find these soft features of human nature where one least expects them. Yet why not expect them ? for if these people are uncultured on the one hand, they are unspoiled on the other. My health begins to yield to the pressure of intense anxiety. I cannot, must not stay an hour, when my patient is able to move ; but before she takes a long journey to a northern climate, I will endeavour to bring her for a single week, to see your retreat. Your gay painting of summer scenery must not tempt me ; matters of the utmost moment depend on my reaching home by April. - - - You shall have proof sheets of the volume to exercise your criticism.* They have been transmitted to me, and give me the idea of a scaffold I am about to mount. But we shall discuss

.....

* This relates to the publication of the volume of poems.

abundance of topicks, literary and domestick, when we reach your Arcadia. Send me a bill of health in the mean time, and accept of your pupil's affectionate regards.

LETTER CXXI.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Bristol, Hotwells, Jan. 20, 1803.

MY DEAR HELEN,

I AM sure, that distance, and sorrow, and care have not extinguished that ardour of benevolence, which was formerly rather excited and heightened by the causes that generally freeze the friendships of the world. I feel myself already in danger of moralizing and speculating. If once I wander into digression, farewell to order, connexion, and information; and to you, of all others, I am most apt to digress. Now for a succinct, dry narrative. Very dry indeed it will prove; for, from the harassed state of my mind, looking back only to grief, and forward to terror, I heard things without listening to them, and saw them without looking at them. First, now, behold me in the streets of Glasgow, preparing to enter the mail coach, which was occupied by two gentlemen, one well dressed, well bred, and rather youthful looking, whose countenance bespoke

good humour and intelligence ; and much veracity of countenance he had, as shall appear in the sequel. The other,—how shall I describe him ? for he was all chagrin at the time, and looking his very worst ; yet, through his neglected, heavy figure, and harsh sun-burnt countenance, some gleams of the gentleman broke dimly forth ; yet I really shrunk from him, and thought of Sterne's Smelfungus. He was sick and he was splenetick ; and he did nothing but growl and murmur, and tell his grievances, all the way to Hamilton. But, though he was surly, he was not vulgar ; his language was that of a manly and enlightened mind, through which gleams of feeling and gentleness broke forth unconsciously. In short, by the time we reached Moffat, I thought him like the ghost of Matthew Bramble. M—, our fellow-traveller, softened him and amused me ; he was intelligent, gay, facetious, and accommodating. He had been a few days before at Dr. M.'s, whom he seemed to know intimately. He is a native of Inverness-shire, and had already been in both the West and East Indies. Laggan was familiar to him, but I could not make him out. At Moffat he went off, proceeding to London, but I took the west road, in company with my new friend, who, by this time, saw my distressing anxiety, and appeared to take considerable interest in me. I saved a hundred miles by this course. I had a letter to a lady in Carlisle, where I should have staid a night. Unable, in the ferment of my mind,

to sleep, and unwilling to lose my fellow-traveller, whom I began to look up to with a kind of respect, I proceeded without sleeping ; for, in a carriage, I never can. That day we could neither get a mail-coach, nor a partner in a post-chaise, so we took places in a right misellaneous voiture, emphatically called the long coach, and very long indeed we thought the time we were in it. I never felt such degradation, or witnessed such depravity and grossness. My new friend was indignant, and disgusted beyond measure, and protested against any such association for the future ; so, after vainly searching the good town of Lancaster for an associate, we took a post-chaise to Liverpool, being now perfectly known to each other through mutual acquaintances. His name is — ; he is sovereign, I presume, of some little *grenadilloe* in the West Indies, and is married to a lady whose connexions I know, and with whom he appears to be very happy. He delighted in speaking of his children, to which, you may believe, Desdemona did seriously incline, for I like those domestick traits, and he seems a fond parent indeed. We had many wise discussions on education, and much nursery discourse, &c. Besides, I, who love to know a little of every thing, know more now of West India matters than ever I thought to have done. This “ fair discourse ” brought us to Liverpool. There I found no rest for the sole of my foot, for M. “ had murdered sleep.” You wonder I give you no account of

the places I went through ; I really cannot, we passed so rapidly. Only this, I did not like the face of either Cumberland or Lancashire. They were flat, bleak, unvaried ; having neither the romantick variety of dear Scotland, nor the mild features and rich culture which I expected, and afterwards met with, in England. Indeed the season, and my mind, were so gloomy, that I should scarce have done justice to Elysian prospects, and, I dare say, I did great injustice to Liverpool, which, I am sure, is a fine town, could I but think so ; but my eyes, half closed, could not admit its symmetry, or contemplate its regularity. I was disappointed in their farm-houses too ; for it is in that scene of life, and not among fine people, or wealthy citizens, that I look for discriminating lines of character, to be traced in their habits and form of life ; but O, these are gross and unrural ! —brick farm-houses, built on the very edge of the road, as if to stare at the excluded traveller ; offices at the very end, without a rural court, or any form denoting taste or social order. They have, indeed, little gardens before, but they are such confined, formal, suburban-like things, that they banish the idea of rustick simplicity, nay, even of rural ease. Every place too is covered with tiles, which are my antipathy. My own dear cottage, with its mossy thatch, its woodbine porch, its green court surrounded by shrubs, and its outer court of offices, the image of comfort and regularity, came sadly sweet to my recollection, like

joys departed never to return. I heard, in idea, the roar of my mountain-streams, and the blasts from the hills of my fathers, while England faded from my view. I meant to tell you what I saw, and I feel myself vainly trying to describe what I felt. Well, but I meant to say, the formal wind-mills, and sluggish clay-coloured waters, made me recollect with painful pleasure the pure streams that poured, like melted crystal, from our Alpine hills; and the romantick recesses and sweet waterfalls, where our Highland peasants grind their scanty crop. What pleased me most, was the distinguished beauty of the Lancastrian women, not void of the more attractive charms of grace and softness; for they have, for the most part, good figures; and with them, fine dark eyes are often united with a soft complexion, clear pale; which you must have observed, do not often meet elsewhere. I was absolutely dazzled, I do not know how, when I saw so much beauty set off with so much elegance; for every one is dressed; and this descends to the lower classes. I am sure you are very tired, and will not object to my going a while to dream of the fair Lancastrians, before I proceed. I never had so much writing leisure since I was a girl, and I fly to it, as a refuge from "the pains and penalties of idleness," and those eating cares that follow where we fly, banish sleep, and embitter reflection.

LETTER CXXII.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Hotwell-House, Bristol,
January 21, 1803.

NOW I come to reclaim your attention to my sorrowful pilgrimage. I do not much like the English towns; the streets are narrow, and, except those of Liverpool, they have all an unsocial look, that I cannot tell how to describe. Lancaster I should not include; it is more cheerful, built of stone, and derives an air of dignity from its castle, which somehow brings the red roses and holy Henry, and

“Anjou’s heroine, and the paler rose,
The rival of her crown, and of her woes,”

back very forcibly to my imagination. I have not terms of art to describe the castle; but it is in a style of architecture which pleases me very much, and I have just negative skill enough to be sure it is neither Grecian nor Gothick. From Liverpool I set out about eight in the evening, most resolutely, but avoided the long coach. In the short coach, however, I found one gentleman, the top being loaded with drunken sailors. My companion was a Scot, and the son of a clergyman. In the morning, we breakfasted at the very pretty town of Lichfield, which appeared to me haunted by the ghosts of Johnson and Darwin, whom I could not

get out of my head while I staid there. I saw a fine old cathedral, beautiful gardens, and for the first time clear streams, which Narcissus himself could not view with greater pleasure. Through what an enchanting scene did I pass afterwards ; 'twas a part of Staffordshire, where I found precisely the compact image of plenty, content, and simplicity, that I wished to see, in the farm-houses. Charming varieties of rising grounds, luxuriant vales, solemn shades, and winding streams. Then such noble seats ; such rich overhanging woods, drest in every mellow tint, from dusky red to the palest yellow ; such a soothing air of tranquillity and comfort, and, above all, such visible possibilities of human happiness. I had no idea that mere landscape could have such an effect on a mind so worn with grief and anxiety. But the matchless beauty of this landscape was animated by cheerful countenances of peasants going to their early labour, and brightened by the first rays of a mild autumnal sun. O, how I enjoyed the drowsiness of my fellow-travellers, which left me at leisure to be delighted. At this rate, my paper will be filled before I reach Bristol. Suffice it then, that I arrived before dinner at the shocking, disagreeable town of Birmingham, where I languished in restless impatience all the afternoon, and imagined I saw every body and thing about me looking cold, selfish, and venal. In the morning, I set out by three o'clock, in another long coach, in which, luckily, were only two ladies, mother and daughter.

During some conversation about our arrangements in the coach, I happened to use a Scottish phrase (*better do*). "O how that phrase delights me," said the youngest; "it reminds me of dear Scotland." This was touching an accordant string, and very great we grew immediately; for it appeared these ladies, who reside in a village near Bath, had been on a pilgrimage of love to visit their relations, who are some of the most respectable people in the west, and were now on their return. The old lady was a native of Scotland, and the young one fond of it to enthusiasm. This day, too, we past through a fine country; saw the bloody field of Bosworth, and past by Tewksbury, where the usurper's corpse was carried. It is a fine old town, with houses in it, the most curious, antique fabricks imaginable. I dare say king-making Warwick, and old Nevill, were in some of them. They were in a style of architecture different from any thing I had ever seen or imagined. The church is a stately edifice; the whole end of which is formed into a most noble window, that has a striking effect. We passed through Gloucester, large and populous, full of antique towers and spires, and surrounded by a very rich and beautiful country. The latter is picturesque, with frequent farm-houses, in the true old English style, and shady with orchards. There the country people were not bedizened, nor modernized, but had just the rusticity that I like in their buildings and appearance. In the evening,

we reached the full majestick Severn, which is really a noble looking river. Then were my eyes regaled with a distant view of the Welsh mountains, and my ears with the sound of Bristol bells; these latter were to me like a knell, and my terrors increased every moment as I drew nearer. My new friends were all kindness and sympathy, and procured a chaise to carry me to Park Row at eleven, where I entered the door trembling, and was glad to find, by the stir through the house, that there was nothing funereal about it. I found my patient on a settee, with her kind friends about her. Worthy people, what do I not owe them! There is no doing justice to their merit and kindness. In two days she had an alarming relapse, occasioned by inflammation in the breast, for which the doctor ordered her to resort to the Wells, as soon as she could be moved with safety. It was a month before this was thought proper. We are now settled in very pleasant and convenient lodgings at the Hotwell-house, which I would describe to you, if you were not already surfeited with description. Now, thank God, I think I can, from our experience, recommend the Hot-Wells to every one threatened with a similar affection: and I am convinced the reason it is not generally effectual, is, that people defer too long coming to it. We have lived a month here in more profound retirement than ever we did in Laggan, not knowing any one in this quarter, except the Protheroes in their various branches, who are indeed inva-

riably kind. Yet, amidst all this melancholy leisure, my mind has been so engrossed by intense anxiety for the absent, and reflections on the past, and melancholy anticipations of the future, that, except mere bills of health and necessary business, I have written to no creature but yourself. Now I hope you will have the grace to set a due value on this proud pre-eminence. One very stormy night lately, I could not close my eyes, nor yet read; so I had recourse to my pencil, for relief to my overburdened mind, and here is the result of this vigil of sorrow, at least as much of it as I can transmit in a letter.

Yes, to my soul, those northern winds are dear,
That howling blast is musick to my ear.
Blast, whose swift wing has swept our Alpine snows,
The rocks of Morven, and the hill of roes,
Say, hast thou wak'd my wild harp's mournful strings,
Bear'st thou the voice of sorrow on thy wings?
Or hast thou rush'd along the sacred shade,
Where those my heart must ever weep, are laid?
From my dear native land begun thy flight—
Bring tidings to my soul, O blast of night!
When shall I view again my narrow vale,
And hear a voice in every whispering gale?
See spring's first violets deck the hallow'd ground,
And trace my children's fairy footsteps round?
Then, in a tender trance of anguish'd joy,
To my fond bosom shall I clasp my boy,
View the soft radiance of his full blue eyes,
Warm the fresh roses on his cheek with sighs,
And, while his curls of waving amber flow
With varying lustre o'er his neck of snow,

The dawn of manly beauty let me trace,
The smile benignant of his father's face ;
While hope auspicious points her wand of gold,
Where future days the latent bud unfold,
And bid hereditary virtues bloom,
To deck with kindred sweets a father's tomb !

Such are my meditations, and such my hopes. Now to tell you what I mean to do. I cannot remove Mary till the milder months arrive. Next week I go to Bristol, to dear good Mrs. Protheroe ; the following one down to Devonshire, to take my last farewell of my dearest friend Mrs. F—r, whom 'tis scarce possible I shall ever see again. Perhaps this is not coldly and precisely prudent ; but I have no notion of friendship that merely exhales in breath, or flourishes on paper. Cromwell's saints got at last above ordinances ; and I have long since got above indulgencies. Ease, and what the world calls pleasure, I despise ; I have no sacrifices to make to luxury or vanity ; but a gratification so dear to my heart, so necessary to my peace of mind, I cannot, will not, deny myself. I know, there are those that will wonder at me, to say no more, for this single indulgence, self-devoted as I have ever been to the advantage and satisfaction of others. Yet it were hard to grudge this cordial drop in the cup of bitterness appointed for me.

* * * * *

I heard once of you through — ; who I hope is like a good friendly hen, spreading her wings

over my chickens in my absence. I get heroick epistles from my young housekeeper too, whose spirit seems to have risen to the occasion. I never feared her doing any thing wrong ; yet, when I think of her diffidence and inexperience, I am agreeably surprised to find her so constantly and decidedly right. Remember me in a manner at once affectionate and respectful to your mother ; and tell your brother how much I was flattered by his kindness to Ourry. I am very warmly and truly yours.

LETTER CXXIII.

TO MRS. F—R, PLYMPTON.

April 4, 1803.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THOUGH trembling at the task which I have undertaken, I feel like a soul released from purgatory. What a dreadful winter I have gone through ! Yet how thankful I am, and ever shall be, that I have once more embraced you ; that I have renewed, and, I hope, strengthened, that affection which will last while any earthly tie remains.

How we do lament your dwelling among those who are unfitted to appreciate or comprehend you ! But you have many little comforts ; and

that superior comfort of looking back to a well-spent life, and forward to the peace which passeth understanding.

Now, my dearest friend, in what words shall I acknowledge your active, cordial, considerate kindness ! How it has supported my spirit, I cannot express. Pray tell Mrs. Cholwich I shall always remember her, not with gratitude only, but pleasure. I am charmed to think so much goodness has opened to itself such a source of innocent and laudable enjoyment to sooth the evening of life. Adieu !

LETTER CXXIV.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BATH.

Laggan, April 11, 1803.

MY EVER DEAR HELEN,

YOU surely have not received my letter from Bath, that was sent thence by Mr. Guthrie, and which enclosed one for our mutual friend Mr. Mackay ; for if you are the same unaltered and unalterable Helen, you would not let me blear my dim eyes, and wear out my grey goose quill with pompous narration and veritable description, without once saying, "thanks, gentle Anne." But you never would make this acknowledgment. I must, in compliance with the intreaties of your

great and grateful admirer, A. O. G., thank you for favours conferred on her, which are her nightly dream, and daily conversation. Thus far I had written when your letter appeared, and my doubts vanished. I am happy that, in the irksome gloom of my exile, I had it in my power, by a faithful though brief transcript of what occurred to me during my too rapid journey, to afford you any degree of amusement. I am now literally "weary worn with care," and a hundred objects press at once upon my attention ; but when I can breathe at leisure, I shall tell you a few more tidings. Yet how painful it is to me to retrace the steps of that sad pilgrimage, where too much leisure for my present state of mind, made all that ever I lamented recur so forcibly to my sick imagination, bereft as I was of my comforter and support. Let me quote myself :

I had sigh'd o'er the bud, I had wept o'er the blossom,
And beauty full blown I have liv'd to deplore ;
But the voice that was wont to speak peace to my bosom
Shall whisper compassion's soft language no more.

No more shall the bosom, when heaving with anguish,
In the kind breast of sympathy seek for relief ;
While helpless I wander, or hopeless I languish,
Ah ! cold is the heart that would share all my grief.

Except Mr. Protheroe's family, whom I can never think of, or mention without esteem or gratitude, our correspondence with the living inhabitants of Bristol was very small indeed : but I

could give some tidings from the dead, among whom I spent much time.

“The great, the gay, the noble, and the sage,
And boastful youth, and narrative old age,”
are to be found there, from all parts of the kingdom. The most distinguished people come there to die ; and the whole cathedral at Bristol, and church at Clifton, are hung with marble tablets, with ingenious and affecting inscriptions : two only I will particularize. Mason to his Maria ;

“Take, holy earth, all that my soul held dear.”
The other, a large tablet of exquisite white marble, in the form of a shield, with bass-relief figures, admirably designed and finished. Surely you have seen Sterne’s Letters to Eliza ; if not, do without delay read them. It is her monument I am describing. The inscription is simply thus :

“Sacred to the Memory of ELIZABETH DRAPER, Wife
to GENERAL DRAPER,
Who died at Bristol in the 28th year of her age.
She was eminent for Genius and Benevolence.”

There is an urn, with a drapery hanging in such loose easy folds over it, that you are tempted to lift it up. On one side is a female figure of matchless grace and elegance, “her looks commercing with the skies.” She leans pensively on the urn with one hand, and holds a flaming torch in the other. This represents Genius. On the other side is a figure of a less dignified air, but, “soft, modest, melancholy, female,” &c. who seems to look compassionately into a nest of

young birds, which she holds in one hand, and feeds with the other. This is Benevolence. Beyond these, on one side, a broken column denotes the fragility of the most perfect human forms, which moulder and decay like the noblest productions of human art and ingenuity. On the other, a palm, the emblem of immortality, appears like the undying spirit. But I must not indulge this descriptive mood, to which my journey northward would give full scope, had I leisure. Yet fain would I describe Devonshire, the English Arcadia ; its pure streams, its pastoral hills, its rich vales, and softly genial climate. This, indeed, is the region of picturesque beauty. There I went to meet the spring, for there

“ She first unfolds her mantle green.”

There I spent part of an April-like March, in the enjoyment of a felicity that I did not hope to taste during my earthly pilgrimage. Fain would I give you a faint idea of the undiminished excellence, the unwithering spirits, and unchilled affections of her

“ Who heard with pain my parting sighs,
And long pursued me with her eyes.”

In short, of my own self-same Anne Ourry, now Mrs. F—r. But a theme that wakes all the powers of imagination and memory, and makes the heart and eyes overflow at once, deserves, and shall have a letter to itself. *The book of books**

.....
* Poems by the author, ludicrously so called by Miss Dunbar.

has been delayed to my great vexation ; for I believe, had it come in time, it might have obtained some notice in England, where Burns's mighty, overpowering genius has swept down the mounds of prejudice in its impetuous progress. Nay, it has absolutely made way for a partiality for Scotch productions. This merit may, no doubt, be divided with Campbell, who is indeed forte-piano in a very superior degree. My impression, however, thanks to the active zeal of my friends, is the largest ever printed in Scotland ; but the same printer has the Court of Session Reports (formidable rivals indeed,) to print all winter. They were busy with my beloved old bard when I came away, and had only the subscribers names (to me, and many others, the most interesting part) to finish. I know, by the mental pangs I have suffered for some days past, that the book is born, and you may expect to hear it some day squalling at your door. But, alas ! those rough nurses, the criticks, whose hands do not spare, nor their eyes pity ! Bitterness may be borne,

“ But what high heart could ever yet sustain
The publick blast of insolence and scorn ? ”

and who believes, or cares for that want or leisure, and numberless other wants which you know of ? among which I wish, for the sake of my repose, want of feeling could be included in the present instance. The Edinburgh Review is (woe is me !) a work of ability, from which there lies no appeal. These young censors, however, seem to have

studied Shakspeare well ; and to be emulous of the character of Cesario, of whom Olivia says,

“ O what a deal of scorn looks beautiful,
In the contempt and anger of his lip !”

They seem to expect the publick will regard their *beautiful scorn* with the same partiality. For my part, I am rather inclined, like Orsino, to dread what they may prove

“ When time has sow’d a grizzle on their case,”
as they are already so apt to be scornful.

I met two very agreeable women at Mr. Thomson’s, one of whom is a sister of Mr. ———’s futura. I like her much. Of your friend’s choice I can only say, that I heard M—y speak highly of her, who knows her very well. Shut out, as she must be, in some measure, from the vain and busy world, by the peculiar nature of her duties, what a delicate and superior happiness must her’s be, to whom is allotted the charge, so like that of a guardian angel, to preside, invisible to him, over the comforts and enjoyments of one of the worthiest and most amiable of mankind, still more beloved as he is more dependent !— Why have I not left room to tell you, how sweetly rural and sequestered I found my dwelling at Woodend,* or of the transport that filled the dear family, both native and adopted, when I arrived ? The dear creatures are all improved. B— has

.....

* A sequestered but beautiful retreat near Stirling, to which the author removed some months after.

done wonders, and my poor servants too, worthy creatures—it would be ungrateful not to record their fidelity. One misfortune I have to lament; my little boy speaks nothing but English. I am so provoked at his losing the native tongue, though it appears to be the only loss which my family sustained in my absence. I regret your collateral losses; yet it is some consolation that your beloved sailor will be permitted to worship his household gods a while longer. Farewell. I have a thousand urgent demands on my attention. Though I cannot write, rest assured of the attachment of

Yours ever.

LETTER CXXV.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, May —, 1805.

MY DEAR HELEN,

VERY sick and very busy as I am, I am so charmed with your goodness, in being so mindful of me under such a pressure, that I lose no time in thanking you, and in congratulating you on the recovery of a mother, a friend, and an exemplary model of every social and domestick virtue. Do me the justice to believe, though urgently advised to take the measure you mention when I was in England, pressed for money in a land of

strangers, that I not only rejected the proposal, but the rejection cost me so little effort, that I never once thought of telling you I had refused it. I should consider it as a stain to the memory of the most delicate and disinterested of human beings, if I, walking so long in the pure light of his spotless mind, should be induced to do any thing, that could bear the construction of disingenuity, to benefit his family. By the Divine blessing, there is little danger of their wanting what is necessary, and it is my duty to endeavour to limit their wishes within narrow bounds. I know you now perfectly, in the simplicity and very similitude of A. O.'s description. Your patience in illness raises you not a little with me. I can't bear the tribe of croakers ; they are indeed

“ Like the black raven hovering o'er my peace,”
no less a bird of omen than of prey ; for they really prey on my comfort. I do not believe these *dis-malites* feel half what I do ; if they did, they would be glad to seize a respite when they could. I believe you very deserving, yet if these clouds did not intervene, you would have more than your share of those showers of manna allotted to support us in our travels through the wilderness. I do think you gather more than a Homer, when I take brothers, and musick, and literature, into the account. I have my share too, though I am doomed to eat it, like the paschal lamb, with bitter herbs. I hope there will be no war, and that your brother will take root and flourish in his na-

tive soil. What a feast must rural and domestick life to be an uncorrupted mind, after tossing about in a profession where the mode of life is so unnatural. I will give my opinion, such as it will be after a hasty perusal, of the poem you had the goodness to send me ; but you in return must give me yours of Dr. Cowper's Malachi. I did not tell you how very ill I have been of the Cowper-mania. I do not now mean the Doctor, but the delightful author of the Task. Read his letters and his life by Hayley, as I did, and you will find them

“ Of power to take the captive soul,
And lap it in Elysium.”

Your young cousin's Poem to Science is a wonderful proof of premature abilities. It shews genius under the direction of wisdom, and does equal honour to his judgment and his poetical faculties. No wonder those, to whom the culture of so fair a flower has devolved, should carefully attend to its unfolding. But if it were mine I would not have it reared in England. Who will care for Scotland, after being bred in so fine a country ? I would have a son of the Muses be a patriot and a true blue Scot. John Bull is not so much alive, either to the tender or ludicrous, as we are. And why ? he has too much ease, and too many conveniencies, which he cultivates to a degree injurious to social life, and social love, and which will produce the same effect on us whenever we attain them. It is partly to this apathy,

that irreligion, the source so fruitful of every evil, is owing. We struggle by the light that kindles darkness into day, through hunger, poverty, and hardship; our blest enthusiasm lights up the dreariest prospects with rays that stream from heaven. Earth-born views are so bounded, that the soul soon sickens with the reiteration of unvaried comforts, and languishes amidst all its enjoyments. There are, doubtless, very many pious people in England among the more enlightened middle classes, but our "virtuous populace" is our peculiar and invaluable blessing. I am now speaking of devotion merely as an earthly comfort. Did I tell you I read "Campbell's Pleasures of Hope" at the Wells, and was charmed and elevated beyond measure?—Our final day is the 11th June. Did I tell you of the Marquis's visit? Was it not very considerate and good? Farewell. I am tired out of measure, and will not bestow another word on you or him, as well as I like you both. Good night.

LETTER CXXVI.

TO MISS DUNBAR, BOATH.

Laggan, May 17, 1803.

MY DEAR HELEN,

YOU must have felt some of the pains and penalties of authorship, to have any idea of the

cordial satisfaction I derived from reading Mrs. Rose's* elegant criticisms. I insist upon it, that it betrays hardihood, insolence, and indeed some hypocrisy, to affect indifference about publick opinion, when one has once left the safe and peaceful shades of privacy. Very reluctant indeed I was to plunge into that stream ; but now that I am in, I most undoubtedly would wish to keep above water as long as possible, and consider such approbation as Mrs. Rose's as an excellent cork jacket to assist my floating. The Della Cruscas, and many others who fed the publick with gilt gingerbread, to the great delight of all masters and misses who loved glitter and tinkle, took very suddenly with their admirers, and sunk as suddenly into deserved oblivion. Plain common sense, with few and simple ornaments, will only be relished by the lovers of nature, at its first appearance. But the power of those judges, in some respects, resembles that of a certain great aerial potentate—it is invisible, indefinite, and unacknowledged ; yet daily increases and extends over all manner of people, and tongues, and nations, and many act under its influence who imagine themselves free agents. I will run this diabolical parallel no further, but merely observe, that, in the long run, good sense generally recognises and obeys, as arbiters of taste, those best

..... ,

* Mrs. Rose, of Kilravock, whose taste and talents are universally known and respected in her own country.

qualified to fix the boundaries of opinion. Praise from the praiseworthy is of all gratifications the highest and most delicate ; and poor authors militant, who must fardels bear, &c. have much need of some such cordial. But, after all, my locality, the narrow circle I walk round, must for ever preclude me from exciting general interest. By the pains you take to sooth my feelings with regard to the wrath of those who ought to thank me for my well meant efforts, I should fear I had expressed too strongly my opinions on that subject ;* but you ought never to indulge a thought that I could be displeased at the generous concern you express, lest it should be hurtful to my interest or reputation. In that matter I have gone to the barrier of truth, and beyond it I will not go for mortal ; and for jesuitical concealments, I know no art but silence. If delicacy or prudence forbid being explicit on any subject, I can let it alone ; but if I touch a subject† from which a thousand publick discussions have long since drawn the veil of concealment, I will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I should like at any rate to be tried by my peers, that is, by people who know as much about the subject as I do. Far from being displeased with you, I consider this as an additional proof of that active,

.....

* Respecting the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, in an essay on that subject ; printed in the volume of poems published by the author of these letters.

† The translation of Ossian.

zealous, and unwearied friendship, which does honour to your own character, as well as to me, and which I often think of with admiration equal to my gratitude. No one has had warmer and more faithful friends, but you are the only invisible female friend who has made distinguished exertions on my behalf (for Miss M. I place to Mrs. F—r's account.) I have lately made a great acquisition in an invisible male friend ; but, alas ! I can hope for little more than his parting blessing, for he is full of days and honour, and drawing near the verge of time, yet takes such a lively interest, and writes so like a gentleman, a christian, and a man of taste and intelligence. *More I must not say.* But I feel a kind of triumphant satisfaction, in finding that age has no power to damp those virtuous feelings which ennoble our nature, when they flow from the proper source. My dear worthy Mr. Arbuthnot* (another instance of generous enthusiasm illuminating life to its closing period,) is fast decaying, and has not been out of his room for many months. The

.....

* Robert Arbuthnot, Esq. late Secretary to the Trustees' Office at Edinburgh ; an elegant scholar and amiable man. He was nearly related to Dr. Arbuthnot, the well known associate of Pope and Swift, whom he resembles in steadiness of principle, cheerful equanimity, and entire resignation to the Divine will. He lived in intimacy with the most distinguished characters of his day for talents and for worth. The venerable Mrs. Montagu, Professor Beattie, author of the *Minstrel*, and the late excellent and much lamented Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo, were among his most particular friends.

very last letter he wrote was to me, and if ever I see you, you shall see it, and be convinced I do not overvalue the writer. I hope you received favourable accounts of all your brothers, particularly your beloved nautical hero, who, I imagine, has a very ample share in the division of affection. He is quite in, or rather on his element now. Pray have you seen Campbell's glorious effort on the Tyrtean lyre ?

“ Her march is on the mountain wave,
Her home is on the sea.”

I wish you would tell me whether you admire Campbell's “ words that glow, and thoughts that burn,” as much as I do ; and whether you are tempted to have a little Teraphim image of Cowper in your chamber for your private devotions ; and whether you are very proud that so many women, distinguished for elegance and intellect, as well as virtue and piety, gave up the pleasures of this vain world for a time, to extract the thorns from his heart, and pour in the wine and oil of consolation. I am always glad when I can warrantably boast of my own sex. We are better than men, upon the whole. Indeed the few amiable men I have known had many *femalities* in their tastes and opinions ; but then I must allow the most respectable women have some masculine traits too. Nature does nothing wrong. It is those women who affect and assume the masculine character, that are insufferable. Tell Barr, for it will charm her, that the two most respecta-

ble women, and firmest, truest friends existing, are about to form an union with each other, by domesticating and living as much together as circumstances will admit, as I shall hereafter explain. She will know I mean Mrs. F. and Miss M. Have you seen my rhyming description of our house ? Perhaps I may conclude it some quiet gloomy evening, with an account of the oaks of Woodend, &c. O that you came to Edinburgh ! Then would you surely visit "my cabin that stands by the wild wood," and cast a look of kindness on its inmates. Ourry, who now, thank God, enjoys perfect health, is always begging me to send her love to you. She will never have done speaking of Boath, which she considers as the abode of taste, elegance, and felicity. I wrote to our friend, congratulating him with heartfelt pleasure on his new connexion, and entreating that his beloved would *own receipt*. But no—so you see it is not you alone that are washed from recollection by the tide of happiness that has flowed in upon our correspondent. But fear not ; we shall yet emerge ; we are too *good* to be forgotten ; and his chosen is too generous to engross him. Pray write, and be sure you tell me every thing, about every body. I am resolved to like all your people, because you like all mine so well, B— B—chr—n, for instance, who is elegance, vivacity, and truth personified. I can no more. Remember me to your excellent mother. I am not more pleased with her regard than yours, but

I am prouder of it. Adieu, my dear Helen ;
 write soon, and think kindly and often of
 Your affectionate friend.

LETTER CXXVII.

TO MRS. F—R.

July, 1803.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAVE you got the hasty scrawl I wrote on my arrival at Woodend ?* So many things crowd on my mind to oppress me, that I fear repetitions ; but forgive and pity one who is indeed

“ Weary worn with care.”

I must apologize to you for what I fear has made you very angry, inscribing the Journal to you by name. When I passed through Edinburgh, on my way to England, Mr. Thomson and I held a council on the arrangement of the names, &c. in the poems. By mutual consent it was settled they should all be reduced to initials, excepting the Christian names, which marked nobody, and could not be guessed out of our own circle. When I was just stepping into the carriage, he said, “ Do you mean to inscribe the Journal to Mrs. F——r ? ” “ Certainly,” said I, and there it rested. I took

.....,

* Here the author resided for the years 1803, 4, 5.

it for granted it should be as we had previously settled. Nothing could exceed my surprise when your name at length stared me full in the face on my return. There is no mortal harm in it, but one had rather not. I wished to sing in the shade too, but they tore off my gourd without mercy. I am ashamed in true earnest, but we shall keep each other in countenance. The whole passes better than I could have expected. Yesterday I heard that lady —, who is now near ninety, but in full possession of all her faculties, and has been accounted a person of refined taste and superior understanding, had one of these books sent her. She was much pleased, and sent to inquire about the author. You may believe Mr. Thomson gave the desired account, "*con amore*." The lady wrote again, enclosing a very handsome present, and adding a flattering and elegantly turned compliment to the "natural muse" of your friend. I am delighted with her praise because it is clear, from the manner in which it is conveyed, that she has discernment to see, that I have just let myself alone, and neither studied the quaint simplicity of the new school, nor the uniform and laboured splendour of Darwin and his imitators. I have been thus minute, because I covet your admiration for this Scottish evergreen, I mean the lady. If one could steer clear of rocks and quicksands in early life, with such a dangerous companion ; enthusiasm, that survives to warm and brighten our decline, is surely the last best friend of suf-

fering humanity. Think of the dignity and interest attached to a character, that can relish the pure pleasures of taste and beneficence, at a period of life when a parcel of wretched Struldbruggs* become contemptible and wearisome to all about them, by being absorbed in cares and fears for the poor helpless individual self. I am anxious to know what Miss M. thinks of this production. I should suppose her too fond of Darwin and Co. to relish my simplicity. I am happy your *prote-gée*, after all, is like to turn out so well. The object of so much care and culture certainly ought to afford you some satisfaction, for the encouragement of female Quixotism. - - - - - I am pleased with my new establishment, though I still languish after the dear cottage, and my courteous peasants, who have more feeling and real sentiment than scores of pretenders, who spend readily what they borrow easily. I am very partial to the S. S. society. The few I meet with are kind and attentive. The worst is, that the neighbours are people quite beyond me ; but then they are enlightened, liberal, intelligent. Their superiority is legitimate, and tolerable. You are not bluntly knocked down by a full purse, without being weighed in the balance and found wanting. A well regulated mind, that knows both what it has, and what it wants, will neither grovel nor climb, but remain stationary, in modest seclusion ; though

* See Swift's description of them in Gulliver's Travels to the Island of Laputa.

the few, who wish to cultivate an acquaintance from superior motives, will always assent to their right of congeniality ; otherwise, an acquaintance with those you cannot be on a footing with, is very humiliating. Have you read Hayley's life of that dear amiable saint, Cowper ? I have no patience with Hayley for expatiating so minutely on Cowper's praise ; whose life and works praise him beyond all that he can say. 'Tis just as if one should assure you that the sun was a bright luminary, and then gravely add, that the ocean was both wide and deep. Cowper wants no stilts to raise him in the esteem of any person possessing either feeling or understanding. Cowper is exactly every thing that I delight in. The bright gleams, by which his mental gloom is occasionally lighted up, throw a kind of mild splendour round his natural and original character. But I will neither anticipate your judgment, nor do what I have so much blamed others for. Examine him by his own light ; and pray observe, in this illustrious instance, how necessary every man of genius, who is at the same time a man of virtue, finds the charm of female society. The graces, the sprightliness, the softness, and the innocence, let me add, of female conversation, the tenderness of female sympathy, and the fidelity and warmth of female friendship, are cordials to a mind too delicately toned for the rough tumults of the corrupt world. What a constellation of female worth shed its sweet influence round this inspired suf-

ferer ! It is worth consideration, how many of the great and gay, who have made a noise and bustle on the stage of life, have sunk into quick and deep oblivion, while we follow with eager interest every step this obscure, unobtrusive mortal makes among his flowers or greens, and are more interested in his very hares and robins, because he loved and tended them, than in all that ever dazzled and amused us among the children of art and vanity. - - - - - Tell me how your book society relish the nosegay of hether, birch, and cannach, which I have sent them. Are you deep in scriptural studies ? Does not your heart burn within you, when you throw the world at a distance, and drink deep at the true fountains of inspiration ?

* * * * *

'Tis a fatal fashion that prevails of late, of calling every one a methodist who goes a little out of the beaten track of mechanical forms. I dare say this illiberal cant drives many into sects, merely for a sanctuary from ridicule. For it does not require so much courage to share ridicule with a body, as to face it alone.

" O bless'd retirement, friend to life's decline,
Retreats from care which *ever* must be thine."

What sacrifice can be too great to make for peace and liberty ? And yet I am not quite satisfied with your retreat. This should not be said. Farewell tenderly.

LETTER CXXVIII.

TO MRS. F—R.

Glasgow, July 13, 1803.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT is a sure proof that I was very little capable of writing, that your kind letter is thus long unanswered. I can't easily make you understand what a cordial it was to me, when I was so "weary worn wi' care," that nothing less than the soothings of friendship, and the dim distant views of peace beyond this world, could allay the fever of my mind. But before I say one word of the ordeal through which I have past, I will answer your letter. - - - - - I am glad, that others doing what they ought, relieves you in some measure from the dilemma you were in about your *protégée*. To send him fluttering away thus early and unformed, from the nest where he has been so tenderly cherished, must have been a severe alternative, after all the pains you have taken. When one does a generous action merely from the pure delight it gives the heart, 'tis very mortifying to be obliged to stop short before the plan of beneficence is completed. I am greatly pleased matters continue on the old footing. It would be a dismal blank to your warm, active mind, to have no object near to exercise its affections. Now, at the distance at which you

keep him, he excites interest, without teasing and wearing you out. And then your holidays are so joyful to him. Now how shall I briefly, and at the same time clearly, shew you the track I have trodden since I left you. - - - - -

Alas! for my beloved cottage! But I will not distress you with the retrospect. You will be pleased to hear that nothing could exceed the general kindness and considerate and friendly attention of my neighbours that were. As it is, I see much beauty and many comforts about my new abode. When the mist that over-cloud my mind are a little dispelled, I hope to taste, what I now merely look on with cold critical approbation. You, who live so much in the fair creation of your fancy, need not be told what a pang it awakens to part with a home, where every thing, in a manner, owes its existence to you; where one has suffered and enjoyed what self-lovers can form no idea of, and which is endeared, by being, in a manner, rendered sacred to the memory of those we love. The letters with the accounts of my poor father's death, came before I left the country, but were concealed from me till the bitterness of the other parting was over. - - - - - What an asylum, what a comfort, has that dwelling been to many others, besides the family that inhabited it! There indeed social life, and social love, seemed the warmer for being compressed within narrow bounds. There I lived and moved, and had a being, in some degree useful and interesting to

others. Hereafter I shall indeed exist ; but my highest hope must be to spend

“ Quiet, tho’ sad, the remnant of my days,”
far, far from my old haunts, my old habits, and my old associates. I will not balance the account, for you will do that for me, and reproach my croaking to boot. I am all penitence and submission, so pray be moderate.

LETTER CXXIX.

TO MRS. SMITH, JORDAN HILL.

Woodend, Sept. 12, 1803.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU wonder I have been so long answering your kind letter ; I too wonder, and must account for my silence in a manner no less wonderful. Do you know my mind has at length lost all its elasticity. That happy faculty, that inestimable cork jacket, by the aid of which, however deep I might plunge, I still rose buoyant on the waves of calamity, is gone. Here I am, safe ashore, and yet I gasp in amaze, like a creature removed from its native element. Time and habit may amend this ; but at present I am, like Orpheus, at the hazard of my peace, looking back to the gloomy region I have left behind, and from a somewhat similar motive ;

“ For so to interpose a little ease,
Do my frail thoughts dally with surmise.”

All this is very fine, and very fanciful, you will say ; but the plain matter, I believe, is, that my mind was so exhausted by a long succession of painful exertions, that quiet, now I have attained it, is like the faint stupor of a person cast ashore from a wreck. Yet I cannot call it leisure, either ; for, arranging and adjusting every thing belonging to so large a family, in an entire new establishment, kept me very busy, and when I was not busy, I was stupid. My patient, however, comes well on. My mother grows more composed, walks out in the air, and her sleep and appetite return. Little Grant, the dear son of my lamented Charlotte, is another of my tender cares. I thought him puny and brought him here for a little country air, and that he might know and love me. But he will not stay long enough, nor come back soon enough, to form or renew affection. His father will never be at ease till he gets him home ; nor would it suit me to keep him.

Of this place, suffice it to say, that the house is excellent, capacious, airy, and well laid out. It is sheltered, at a small distance behind, by craggy rocks, and surrounded on three sides by pleasant woods, through which there are many openings, walks, and sloping glades ; and for birds it is a perfect aviary ; I could not have conceived so many to be contained in one wood of this extent ; they find covert in various beautiful shrubs, which,

with woodbine and hazel, abound greatly. These woods too are diversified by every kind of tree that bears our climate. The front of the house commands an extensive and varied prospect over a level and fertile country, bounded by mountains lofty and wild, whose fine marked contour is always noble, and at sunset beautiful. This same house stands in a circular enclosure, or lawn ; it is surrounded by a wild hedge, after the Devonshire manner, mixed with fruit-trees, and allowed to run into a little becoming disorder, which nearly emulates "the negligence of nature, wide and wild." In short, the place is neither trimmed nor rolled, and I like it the better. Yet it has no air of savage wildness, but on the contrary, looks very tranquil and domestick, the garden excepted, which is in a most slovenly undress, and looks as if its hair had not been combed this dozen years. Yet it is so wood-surrounded, musical and sequestered, that I like it much. It lies on a slope, and a little brook runs thro' the bottom of it ; opposite, a wood rises "shade above shade" on an ascent. Yet none but the owls and blackbirds seem to agree with me in liking this dark and shady sanctuary of peace, for such it seems to me. I, accustomed to stem the torrent, am not afraid to encounter with its ruggedness, and flatter myself that the efforts I make to scatter its gloom, will, in some degree, dissipate my own. I meet with much civility from some fine people who live near us. I am, on the whole, thankful, yet not

satisfied. There is a cold void in my heart. I am accustomed to love and be beloved by those around me, and I miss the cordial glance of sympathy and kindness. It is no one's fault : but it is my misfortune :

The voice that was wont to speak peace to my bosom
Shall whisper compassion's soft language no more !

I do not solely allude to the breach that is irreparable. There are a set of good kind of people, perhaps unsusceptible of the delicacies of friendship, whom long habit, and the interchange of kind offices, has endeared to one ; who sincerely lament our misfortunes, and cordially enjoy our comforts ; whom we regard with that kind of instinctive affliction, which a susceptible mind will bestow on the trees that have sheltered, or the brooks that have murmured to us for any length of time. These ties, which, though not tender, I find very tough, are all broke by change of residence ; and here are no materials to spin them anew. The common people here are so gross, so sordid, they neither love nor esteem their superiors. And how should they, when these last regard them with such scornful indifference ? The middle rank, that most valuable and happiest link in the chain of society, which superadds the polish of the upper, in some degree, to the strength of the lower, and was wont to connect and strengthen both ; that class of society, where I might say, with the Psalmist, "all my delights are placed," has here, I think, ceased to exist. I have my

children, and they are worthy of my love, but necessarily more each others companions, than mine. I feel this desideratum, more for their sake than my own. I ought to be pleased, and shall, I hope, be tranquil ; but not yet. Do not tire of this querulous length of letter, for it has done me much good to tell you all this, and to think how sorry you will be. Thank James for his notable exertions, as my collector and treasurer. Every body finds collecting those petty debts uphill work. Miss M. though naturally mild and timid, carried through her part of that business, with a heart of iron and face of brass, and found occasion for both.

You are too happy and too lazy to visit me here ; and yet you have done many idler things, and I should be so thankful ! With love to all your dear fireside, believe that I shall always be much yours.

LETTER CXXX.

TO MRS. F—R.

Woodend, Oct. 4, 1803.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT is not easy to describe the joy I felt on reading your letter. I cannot bear the cruel indelicacy of aggravating the disadvantages one can't possibly remedy. Yet I was by no means

satisfied with your situation. It seemed so very uncongenial, especially now that the chief ties that first held you there are broken. This new arrangement does my heart good. The place, society, and the footing on which you are to stand, are quite to my mind. My spirit sunk at the thought of your living always where you had no particular attachment, no kindred mind, none who thoroughly understood your character. I think I could not desire to live a day longer, than while my heart was warmed by an affectionate intercourse with those I love. The languor, which is the very worst consequence of the decline of life, checks that eagerness in cherishing our connexions with the absent, which youth and enthusiasm produce; and to be completely blended, nay, kneaded, into the mass of beings who live merely for themselves, and look not out of that narrow circle, is a most unnatural state for you. It would indeed be losing you to those that love you best.

* * * * *

Here you have, I fear, a repetition, for I think I sketched my parting pilgrimage before—Our large family is managed with more order and ease than you could expect. But indeed we have the advantage of abundant scope; our house is large as well as pleasant; and the inhabitants are very willing to please each other, which is a material point.

* * * * *

I have my poor dear Charlotte's little boy with me, and it pleases me to cherish her memory in him. He is lively and good tempered ; what more he will be, time must shew. I was highly gratified lately by a letter from a person I never saw or heard of, conveying to me a compliment on the work you wot of, most flattering to me, for my principles were as much applauded as my abilities. It contained moreover——. If I could find in my heart to part with it, I would send you the letter, that you might admire its simple elegance.

“ Blush, grandeur, blush !—proud courts withdraw your blaze !”

Adieu ! dear, very dear friend.

LETTER CXXXI.

TO MRS. F—R.

Glasgow, Jan. 9, 1804.

THE cheerful tenor of your last letter was a great cordial to my spirits. I rejoice exceedingly at the prospect of your removal ; not that I expect, or would have you expect, that every thing and every body will be quite to your wish where you are going. In vain would we encircle the globe by successive removals, in search of an accumulation of comforts ; those comforts, which

the frugal, though bountiful hand of Providence, has scattered in various proportions, to alleviate the sorrows and sufferings of a state only meant as the pathway to felicity. Yet of these ingredients of happiness, on which an elegant and sensible mind is most dependent, I am confident many await you ; and, amidst all the wealth of Flora, which your industrious ingenuity had lavished round, and all the softness of a genial climate, I always thought of you with an anxious and desponding tenderness, well knowing your heart was not at home, could not be at home among people who so little comprehended you. Your warmth of heart and energy of character were quite beyond them, and you would have continued a stranger after fifty years residence. I would carefully banish from my mind the absurd and silly fastidiousness of working myself up to relish no conversation but that of wits and scavans ; it would be a regimen of pickles and marmalades, without bread or water. Common sense, and common integrity, with some degree of heart, I insist on in my companions. Knaves and fools I will positively have nothing to do with. Some one mind that thinks and feels as I do myself, is indispensable. 'Tis like my morning tea, the only luxury I care for, which habit has made necessary, morally necessary, because this favourite indulgence, this mental banquet, meliorates my temper and expands my heart. I do not pity any person merely for being deprived of pleasure,

however innocent, or however elegant. The time of trial is hourly shortening, and the hopes of futurity proportionally strengthening, to those who look forward to another state of existence. But, I think, where one finds the kindly affections continually chilled and repelled, and the disposition to spleen and censure as often excited, it may be truly called a state of temptation. - - - - do very well for each other, and with each other I shall gladly leave them, now you are likely to get out of their dense atmosphere. The more I think of your change, the more I am pleased with it. Miss M.'s constant attention to you at such a distance, has demonstrated the strength of her attachment, and established her claim to yours. Johnson says, Pope and Martha Blount were necessary to each other, because the events of their past lives were pictured on each others minds. It is one of many attractions you have towards each other, that the same may very truly be said of you. Of your mutual friendship I shall only say,—may it be perpetual! Adieu!

LETTER CXXXII.

TO MISS MALLIET.

Woodend, Jan. 11, 1804.

DEAR MADAM,

I RECEIVED a letter two days ago, from our dear friend Mrs. F—r, in which she mentions

your having the goodness to execute a commission, &c. I was proud to find you so solicitous about having the books. By the time you receive this, I hope they will have arrived ; for I ordered them to be sent to you some time ago. I gladly seize this occasion of expressing the sense I entertain of the zealous interest you and good Mrs. M. have taken in my affairs ; and how useful your kind exertions proved in the unlooked for emergency which occasioned my journey to England. We were much flattered to hear you were disappointed at our not taking the London road. I never made such a sacrifice of inclination to prudence in my life, as I did in coming home by the west road. I am not clear I could have done it, had I been sure of getting credit for my principal motive, which, in truth and verity, would have been to see you ; but I was sure of meeting with many Eliabs who would say to me ; “ Why camest thou hither, and with whom hast thou left those few lambs in the wilderness ? Surely I know the pride and naughtiness of thy heart ; to see the *city* art thou come.” Did you know the struggle it cost me, you would give me credit for self-command and self-denial ; qualities very necessary for a person, whose duty it is to act and think solely for others. I little thought, during my remaining pilgrimage through this world, to taste so much of the pure and tender satisfaction which connects with our early warm affections, as I enjoyed at ——. Have you ever

met with any body like our friend ? I think neither you or I need lament the want of a sister, while we divide between us a heart so pure, so liberal, and so faithful. To know the world so well as she does, and yet retain all her integrity—untainted by its corruption, unbiassed by its prejudices ! In this particular she stands unrivalled and alone. Vehement she is ; but if she were not, she would not love us so well as she does. She is indeed “made of the firm truth of honour.” I cannot enough admire the resources her active and affectionate mind creates to itself. Her garden, which she has half animated ; her birds, who seem to have caught a spark of her own vivid intellect ; and her young *ultra marine* pupil, whom she has refined and civilized almost against the bias of nature, are only less wonders than herself. Yet, though she will always create something to love and take solace in, 'tis grievous to see the benevolence of that kind, and the energy of that ardent mind, evaporate among those good little gossipping women at —, who understand her just as well as I do algebra. Her strength of character puzzles and overawes them. They are afraid of being scorched by that lambent flame, by which we should be cheered and delighted. Pity, that a person so made for all the duties and enjoyments of friendship, should live in a state that may well be called a solitude of the heart !

LETTER CXXXIII.

TO GEO. MACINTOSH, ESQ. DUNCHATTAN.

Melville Place, Nov. 23, 1806.

MY DEAR SIR,

DREADED as it was, I felt the shock of the sad intimation of your late loss very forcibly indeed. What a light is extinguished ! An event of this kind comes home to every one's bosom ; for what, that we most wish for, or aspire to, did not your lamented daughter possess ? robust health, singular strength of mind and body, unequalled talents, unclouded prosperity, rich possessions, and fair prospects ; and how soon have all those high-prized blessings fled like a dream !

My dear Sir, if your sorrows were proportioned to the value, either of what you have lost, or are too likely to lose, who could console you, or what could fill up the void ? Nature must have its way ; you must mourn for the past, and tremble for the future. As the wealthy must needs pay heavier taxes for their luxuries, those who possess superior wealth, in friends on whom nature has bestowed her richest endowments, must pay a proportionate tax to calamity, when bereaved of them. The hand which bestows good and evil, in wise and just proportions, has been singularly bountiful to you. How many blessings have you been permitted to enjoy, and to diffuse to others !

Shall Job receive good at the hands of God, and shall he not receive evil also ? How few can look back on so much felicity as has fallen to your share ; and how, my dear friend, could you consider yourself as heir to the common lot of humanity, had this cup continued full ? “ Whom he loveth he chasteneth.” I will not vainly endeavour to dam up the stream that nature appointed to flow ; nor can I expect that you can, while the wound is recent, bow down to the Divine decree, with that degree of submission which will enable you to compute and arrange your remaining blessings. Yet, I trust, when the overburdened heart has in some measure discharged its sorrows, the remembrance of a well-spent life, the blessings of HIM that was ready to perish, the contemplation of a promising and flourishing progeny ; and, above all, the blessed hope of salvation through the merits of a Redeemer, may yet lead you to own, with devout resignation, “ that, though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.” Yes, in the blessed morning of the resurrection it will come, to all “ who have tasted that God is gracious.” That you, dear Sir, may be among that happy number, is the sincere wish, and earnest prayer, of your affectionate and truly sympathising friend.

LETTER CXXXIV.

TO GEO. MACINTOSH, ESQ. DUNCHATTAN.

Melville Place, Dec. 5, 1806.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE received your letter, and thank you for the particulars (sad as they are) which it contains. I do indeed pity you from my very soul. And now, even now, after the heavy tribute is paid, and the grave has actually closed on the object of so much affection, admiration, and sorrow; both Mary and I have a difficulty to persuade our hearts and imaginations of the reality of what has happened. It seems, somehow as if so much life could not die; as if a person so active, and who occupied so conspicuous a place on the theatre of existence, could not thus suddenly, thus prematurely, be withdrawn from it. It is a melancholy gratification to the surviving friends of characters of such distinction, that their departure gives a kind of electric shock to the sphere in which they moved; and that they live to memory long, long after the vulgar dead are swallowed in oblivion. Besides the more solid and rational consolations I formerly mentioned to you, all that publick sympathy and extensive celebrity can give, are yours. The views of a future world, the vast conceptions that distend the mind, when by the aid of faith (even on this

side time) "Death seems swallowed up in immortality,"—these are the sure and lasting refuge ; yet the weakness of suffering mortality naturally lays hold of every aid on which the agonized mind can for a moment repose itself. This is pardonable ; for, He, who ordained that we should suffer and should mourn, has also so made us, that a general sense of the value and importance of our loss prevailing around us, is to us a kind of temporary consolation.

Mrs. Macintosh's fortitude, in bearing her loss, and the steady and affecting retrospect she took of her beloved child's talents and virtues, from their early blossom to full maturity, is just what I should have expected from a mind like hers, so strong, and yet so tender. To her this letter should have been addressed, but that I suppose she would scarce, in her present weak state, be permitted to read it. I do not wonder that every thing that belonged to the late extinguished light, should, by those who had the happiness of her friendship, be considered as relicks. Her intimacies and attachments lying among those whose abilities and attainments did honour to the sex, there is no doubt but her memory will be honoured, and adorned as such a memory ought.

May the Divine aid, and peculiar blessing, also be with you in this day of trial, like a rainbow on the cloud, to shew that He will not utterly destroy. Wherever I am at present, and whatever doing, my imagination is at Dunchattan ; no more, alas !

the refuge of distress, or the haunt of social cheerfulness and domestick comfort. Write, dear Sir, to me, who am interested in every thing, and to whom you can express your feelings without restraint. O, if your dear friend and mine can be for a moment detached from sickness and sorrow, to remember the absent, the affectionate, and the afflicted, tell her, the sympathy that at this moment fills my heart and eyes, is very deep and very tender. What would I not do to help her, if I could ! All past kindness rises in review before me. O, what a foreboding agony seized me the day I parted with her. I have said too much ; but I have done. Providence is every day raising up new friends to me ; but they are distant and unknown, and never can replace the old, no never ! I have wandered, in the fulness of my heart, from my first purpose. Though I doubt not unworthy of the subject, this faint memorial of departed excellence will be a proof that I have mourned with those friends in adversity, who formerly gladdened me with the beams of their prosperity. Occupy yourself, dear Sir, with writing to me and to others. May you be supported in this great conflict, and spiritually improved by it ! So prays your sincere and sympathising friend.

THE
NYMPH OF THE FOUNTAIN
TO CHARLOTTE.

[The following lines are addressed to the young lady who forms so interesting a portion of the family circle of Mrs. Grant, and whose early death is noticed by her in so affecting a manner. The fountain and stream to which they allude have already interested the reader in one of the letters.]

*" O fountain Arethuse, and thou honour'd flood,
" Smooth sliding Mincia, crown'd with crisped reeds,
" That strain I heard was of a higher mood,
" ——— but now my oat proceeds. MILTON.*

.....

FAIR daughter of that fleeting race
Who fade like Autumn's leafy store,
Welcome, my rocky haunts to trace,
And all my secret cells explore.

* Full many an oak, whose lofty head
With sacred misletoe was crown'd,
Since first I own'd that stony bed,
Sunk dodder'd to its native ground.

.....
* The way to this beautiful fountain lies through a mossy heath, entirely covered with large fallen trees, mostly sunk into the earth by their own weight.

And many a towering grove of pine,
 Whose gloom shut out the noon-day sun,
 In shatter'd ruin lies supine,
 Since first my wat'ry course begun.

And many a toiling race of man
 Has joy'd in youth, and mourn'd in age,
 Since first my pensive view began
 To trace their weary pilgrimage.

And many a nymph with sounding bow,
 Slow-rolling eyes, and heavy locks,
 As young, as fair, as soft as thou,
 Has chac'd the deer o'er yonder rocks.

And when the sun's meridian heat
 With fervid splendour fir'd the heath,
 Oft have they sought my cool retreat,
 With glowing breast and panting breath.

Yet, never did I pour my stream
 To bathe a breast more pure than thine,
 Or visit eyes in whose mild beam
 So clear the gentler virtues shine.

When with light step thy naked feet
 Move quick my primrose banks along,
 I bid my streams with murmur sweet
 Their liquid melody prolong.

When Echo to thy voice replies
 From yonder arch of rugged stone,
 Well pleas'd I lift my humid eyes,
 As blue and languid as thy own :

When from yon hazle's pendant shade
 Sweet spring awakes the blackbird's strain,
 Come to my bosom, gentle maid,
 And lave thy streaming locks again.

Pluck from my brink the flow'ry store
 That blushing decks the infant year,
 And to increase their beauty more,
 Deign round thy brow the wreath to wear.

And when the summer's ardent glow
 Shrinks every brook in yonder plain,
 Come where my lucid waters flow,
 And bathe thy graceful form again.

Nor yet, when wint'ry tempests howl,
 To haunt my lonely margin cease,
 Thro' life's dark storms the virtuous soul
 Finds Reason's steady light increase.

Hard ice, that crusts my current clear,
 Renews more pure my sparkling stream ;
 Thus may Affliction's hand severe
 Add lustre to the mental gem.

Where'er you rove, where'er you rest,
 May Peace your pensive steps attend,
 And halcyon Innocence your breast
 From each contagious blast defend !

• • • • •
 FINIS.
 • • • • •

1, 85, 12-3, 0, 150,

DA
880
H6G6
1809
v.2

Grant, Anne
Letters from the mountains

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
