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To Mr Henry Davis, Bookseller, in London

Abergavenny, Aug. 4

RESPECTED SIR,

I have received your esteemed favour of the 13th ultimo, whereby it appeareth that you have perused those same letters, the which were delivered unto you by my friend the Reverend Mr Hugo Behn, and I am pleased to find you think they may be printed with a good prospect of success, inasmuch as the objections you mention, I humbly conceive, are such as may be redargued,* if not entirely removed. And, first, in the first place, as touching what prosecutions may arise from printing the private correspondence of persons still living, give me leave, with all due submission, to observe that the letters in question were not written and sent under the seal of secrecy; that they have no tendency to the *mala fama** or prejudice of any person whatsoever, but rather to the information and edification of mankind – so that it becometh a sort of duty to promulgate them *in usum publicum*.* Besides, I have consulted Mr Davy Higgins, an eminent attorney of this place – who, after due inspection and consideration, declareth that he doth not think the said letters contain any matter which will be held actionable in the eye of the law. Finally, if you and I should come to a right understanding, I do declare *in verbo sacerdotis** that, in case of any such prosecution, I will take the whole upon my own shoulders, even *quoad** fine and imprisonment – though, I must confess, I should not care to undergo flagellation: *tam ad turpitudinem, quam ad amaritudinem pœna spectans*.* Secondly, concerning the personal resentment of Mr Justice Lismahago, I may say, *non flocci facio** – I would not willingly vilipend* any Christian if, peradventure, he deserveth that

epithet – albeit I am much surprised that more care is not taken to exclude from the commission all such vagrant foreigners as may be justly suspected of disaffection to our happy constitution, in Church and State. God forbid that I should be so uncharitable as to affirm positively that the said Lismahago is no better than a Jesuit in disguise, but this I will assert and maintain, *totis viribus*:* that, from the day he qualified, he has never been once seen *intra templi parietes** – that is to say, within the parish church.

Thirdly, with respect to what passed at Mr Kendal's table when the said Lismahago was so brutal in his reprehensions, I must inform you, my good sir, that I was obliged to retire not by fear arising from his minatory reproaches (which, as I said above, I value not of a rush), but from the sudden effect produced by a barbel's roe which I had eaten at dinner – not knowing that the said roe is at certain seasons violently cathartic, as Galen observeth in his chapter *περί ιχθύος*.*

Fourthly, and lastly, with reference to the manner in which I got possession of these letters, it is a circumstance that concerns my own conscience only. Sufficeth it to say, I have fully satisfied the parties in whose custody they were, and, by this time, I hope I have also satisfied you in such ways that the last hand may be put to our agreement, and the work proceed with all convenient expedition – in which hope I rest, respected sir,

your very humble servant,

JONATHAN DUSTWICH

PS: I propose, *Deo volente*,* to have the pleasure of seeing you in the great city, towards All Hallowtide, when I shall be glad to treat with you concerning a parcel of MS sermons of a certain clergyman deceased – a cake of the right leaven, for the present taste of the public. *Verbum sapienti*,* etc.

J.D.

To the Revd Mr Jonathan Dustwich, at ——

SIR,

I received yours in course of post, and shall be glad to treat with you for the MS which I have delivered to your friend Mr Behn, but can by no means comply with the terms proposed. Those things are so uncertain – writing is all a lottery – I have been a loser by the works of the greatest men of the age – I could mention particulars, and name names, but don't choose it – the taste of the town is so changeable. Then there have been so many letters upon travels lately published – what between Smollett's, Sharp's, Derrick's, Thickness's, Baltimore's and Baretti's, together with Shandy's *Sentimental Travels*,* the public seems to be cloyed with that kind of entertainment. Nevertheless, I will, if you please, run the risk of printing and publishing, and you shall have half the profits of the impression. You need not take the trouble to bring up your sermons on my account – nobody reads sermons but methodists and dissenters. Besides, for my own part, I am quite a stranger to that sort of reading, and the two persons whose judgement I depended upon in these matters are out of the way: one is gone abroad, carpenter of a man-of-war, and the other has been silly enough to abscond, in order to avoid a prosecution for blasphemy. I'm a great loser by his going off – he has left a manual of devotion half-finished on my hands, after having received money for the whole copy. He was the soundest divine, and had the most orthodox pen of all my people, and I never knew his judgement fail but in flying from his bread and butter on this occasion.

By owning you was not put in bodily fear by Lismahago, you preclude yourself from the benefit of a good plea, over and above the advantage of binding him over.* In the late war,* I inserted in my evening paper a paragraph that came by the post, reflecting upon the behaviour of a certain regiment in battle. An officer of said regiment came to my shop and, in the presence of my wife and journeyman, threatened to cut off my ears. As I exhibited marks of bodily fear more ways than one, to the conviction of the bystanders, I bound him over – my action lay, and I recovered. As for flagellation, you have nothing to fear and nothing to hope on that head: there has been but one printer flogged at the cart's tail these thirty years – that was Charles Watson, and he assured me it was no more than a flea bite. C—— S—— has

been threatened several times by the House of L——, but it came to nothing. If an information should be moved for and granted against you, as the editor of those letters, I hope you will have honesty and wit enough to appear and take your trial. If you should be sentenced to the pillory, your fortune is made. As times go, that's a sure step to honour and preferment. I shall think myself happy if I can lend you a lift – and am, very sincerely,

Yours,

London, Aug. 10th

HENRY DAVIS

Please my kind service to your neighbour, my cousin Madoc – I have sent an almanac and court calendar, directed for him at Mr Sutton's, bookseller, in Gloucester, carriage paid, which he will please to accept as a small token of my regard. My wife, who is very fond of toasted cheese, presents her compliments to him, and begs to know if there's any of that kind which he was so good as to send us last Christmas to be sold in London.

H. D.

*The Expedition
of Humphry Clinker*

VOLUME I

To Doctor Lewis

DOCTOR,

The pills are good for nothing – I might as well swallow snowballs to cool my reins.* I have told you over and over how hard I am to move, and at this time of day I ought to know something of my own constitution. Why will you be so positive? Prithee send me another prescription – I am as lame and as much tortured in all my limbs as if I was broke upon the wheel: indeed, I am equally distressed in mind and body. As if I had not plagues enough of my own, those children of my sister are left me for a perpetual source of vexation – what business have people to get children to plague their neighbours? A ridiculous incident that happened yesterday to my niece Liddy has disordered me in such a manner that I expect to be laid up with another fit of the gout – perhaps I may explain myself in my next. I shall set out tomorrow morning for the Hotwell* at Bristol, where I am afraid I shall stay longer than I could wish. On the receipt of this, send Williams thither with my saddle horse and the *demi-pique*.* Tell Barns to thresh out the two old ricks and send the corn to market, and sell it off to the poor at a shilling a bushel under market price. I have received a snivelling letter from Griffin, offering to make a public submission and pay costs. I want none of his submissions – neither will I pocket any of his money: the fellow is a bad neighbour, and I desire to have nothing to do with him. But as he is purse-proud, he shall pay for his insolence: let him give five pounds to the poor of the parish, and I'll withdraw my action, and in the meantime you may tell Prig to stop proceedings. Let Morgan's widow have the Alderney cow, and forty shillings to clothe her children, but don't say a syllable of the matter

to any living soul – I'll make her pay when she is able. I desire you will lock up all my drawers and keep the keys till meeting, and be sure you take the iron chest with my papers into your own custody. Forgive all this trouble from,

Dear Lewis,

Your affectionate

Gloucester, April 2

M. BRAMBLE

To Mrs Gwyllim, Housekeeper at Brambleton Hall

MRS GWYLLIM,

When this cums to hand, be sure to pack up in the trunk male* that stands in my closet, to be sent me in the Bristol wagon without loss of time, the following articles, viz. my rose collard neglejay, with green robins, my yellow damask and my black velvet suit, with the short hoop; my bloo quilted petticoat, my green manteel, my laced apron, my French commode, Macklin head and lappets and the litel box with my jowls. Williams may bring over my bum-daffee, and the viol with the easings of Doctor Hill's dock water,* and Chowder's lacksitif. The poor creature has been terribly constuprated ever since we left huom. Pray take particular care of the house while the family is absent. Let there be a fire constantly kept in my brother's chamber and mine. The maids, having nothing to do, may be sat a spinning. I desire you'll clap a pad-luck on the wind-seller and let none of the men have excess to the strong bear – don't forget to have the gate shit every evening before dark. The gardnir and the hind may lie below in the landry, to partake the house, with the blunderbuss and the great dog, and I hope you'll have a watchfull eye over the maids. I know that hussy, Mary Jones, loves to be rumping with the men. Let me know if Alderney's calf be sould yet, and what he fought – if the ould goose be sitting, and if the cobbler has cut Dicky, and how the pore anemil bore the operation. No more at present, but rests,

Yours,

Glostar, April 2

TABITHA BRAMBLE

To Mrs Mary Jones, at Brambleton Hall

DEAR MOLLY,

Heaving this importunity, I send my love to you and Saul, being in good health and hoping to hear the same from you, and that you and Saul will take my poor kitten to bed with you this cold weather. We have been all in a sad taking here at Glostar – Miss Liddy had like to have run away with a player man, and young master and he would adone themselves a mischief, but the squire applied to the mare, and they were bound over. Mistress bid me not speak a word of the matter to any Christian soul – no more I shall, for we servints should see all and say nothing. But what was worse than all this, Chowder has had the misfortune to be worried by a butcher's dog, and came home in a terrible pickle – Mistriss was taken with the asterisks, but they soon went off. The docter was sent for to Chowder, and he subscribed a repository, which did him great service – thank God he's now in a fair way to do well. Pray take care of my box and the pillyber,* and put them under your own bed, for I do suppose madam Gwyllim will be a prying into my secrets, now my back is turned. John Thomas is in good health, but sulky. The squire gave away an ould coat to a poor man, and John says as how tis robbing him of his parquisites. I told him by his agreement he was to receive no vails,* but he says as how there's a difference betwixt vails and parquisites, and so there is for sartain. We are all going to the Hotwell, where I shall drink your health in a glass of water, being,

Dear Molly,

Your humble servant to command,

Glostar, April 2nd

WIN. JENKINS

To Sir Watkin Phillips, Bart., of Jesus College, Oxon.*

DEAR PHILLIPS,

As I have nothing more at heart than to convince you I am incapable of forgetting or neglecting the friendship I made at college, I now begin that correspondence by letters which you and I agreed, at parting, to cultivate. I begin it sooner than I intended, that you may have it in your power to refute any idle reports which may be circulated to my prejudice at Oxford touching a foolish quarrel in which I have been involved on

account of my sister, who had been some time settled here in a boarding school. When I came hither with my uncle and aunt (who are our guardians) to fetch her away, I found her a fine, tall girl of seventeen, with an agreeable person, but remarkably simple and quite ignorant of the world. This disposition, and want of experience, had exposed her to the addresses of a person – I know not what to call him – who had seen her at a play, and, with a confidence and dexterity peculiar to himself, found means to be recommended to her acquaintance. It was by the greatest accident I intercepted one of his letters – as it was my duty to stifle this correspondence in its birth, I made it my business to find him out, and tell him very freely my sentiments of the matter. The spark did not like the style I used, and behaved with abundance of mettle. Though his rank in life (which, by the by, I am ashamed to declare) did not entitle him to much deference, yet as his behaviour was remarkably spirited, I admitted him to the privilege of a gentleman, and something might have happened, had not we been prevented. In short, the business took air, I know not how, and made abundance of noise – recourse was had to justice – I was obliged to give my word and honour, etc., and tomorrow morning we set out for Bristol Wells, where I expect to hear from you by the return of the post. I have got into a family of originals, whom I may one day attempt to describe for your amusement. My aunt, Mrs Tabitha Bramble, is a maiden of forty-five, exceedingly starched, vain and ridiculous. My uncle is an odd kind of humorist,* always on the fret, and so unpleasant in his manner that rather than be obliged to keep him company, I'd resign all claim to the inheritance of his estate. Indeed, his being tortured by the gout may have soured his temper, and, perhaps, I may like him better on further acquaintance – certain it is, all his servants and neighbours in the country are fond of him, even to a degree of enthusiasm, the reason of which I cannot as yet comprehend. Remember me to Griffy Price, Gwyn, Mansel, Basset and all the rest of my old Cambrian* companions. Salute the bed-maker in my name; give my service to the cook, and pray take care of poor Ponto, for the sake of his old master, who is, and ever will be,

Dear Phillips,

Your affectionate friend,

and humble servant,

Gloucester, April 2

JER. MELFORD

To Mrs Jermyn, at Her House in Gloucester

DEAR MADAM,

Having no mother of my own, I hope you will give me leave to disburden my poor heart to you, who have always acted the part of a kind parent to me, ever since I was put under your care. Indeed, and indeed, my worthy governess may believe me when I assure her that I never harboured a thought that was otherwise than virtuous – and, if God will give me grace, I shall never behave so as to cast a reflection on the care you have taken in my education. I confess I have given just cause of offence by my want of prudence and experience. I ought not to have listened to what the young man said, and it was my duty to have told you all that passed, but I was ashamed to mention it, and then he behaved so modest and respectful, and seemed to be so melancholy and timorous, that I could not find in my heart to do anything that should make him miserable and desperate. As for familiarities, I do declare, I never once allowed him the favour of a salute, and as to the few letters that passed between us, they are all in my uncle's hands, and I hope they contain nothing contrary to innocence and honour. I am still persuaded that he is not what he appears to be, but time will discover – meanwhile I will endeavour to forget a connection which is so displeasing to my family. I have cried without ceasing, and have not tasted anything but tea since I was hurried away from you, nor did I once close my eyes for three nights running. My aunt continues to chide me severely when we are by ourselves, but I hope to soften her, in time, by humility and submission. My uncle, who was so dreadfully passionate in the beginning, has been moved by my tears and distress, and is now all tenderness and compassion, and my brother is reconciled to me, on my promise to break off all correspondence with that unfortunate youth – but notwithstanding all their indulgence, I shall have no peace of mind till I know my dear and ever-honoured governess has forgiven her poor, disconsolate, forlorn,

Affectionate humble servant,

till death,

Clifton, April 6

LYDIA MELFORD

To Miss Laetitia Willis, at Gloucester

MY DEAREST LETTY,

I am in such a fright lest this should not come safe to hand by the conveyance of Jarvis the carrier that I beg you will write me on the receipt of it, directing to me, under cover, to Mrs Winifred Jenkins, my aunt's maid, who is a good girl, and has been so kind to me in my affliction that I have made her my confidante. As for Jarvis, he was very shy of taking charge of my letter and the little parcel, because his sister Sally had like to have lost her place on my account – indeed I cannot blame the man for his caution, but I have made it worth his while. My dear companion and bedfellow, it is a grievous addition to my other misfortunes that I am deprived of your agreeable company and conversation at a time when I need so much the comfort of your good humour and good sense. But I hope the friendship we contracted at boarding school will last for life – I doubt not but on my side it will daily increase and improve, as I gain experience and learn to know the value of a true friend. O my dear Letty! What shall I say about poor Mr Wilson? I have promised to break off all correspondence, and, if possible, to forget him, but – alas! – I begin to perceive that will not be in my power. As it is by no means proper that the picture should remain in my hands, lest it should be the occasion of more mischief, I have sent it to you by this opportunity, begging you will either keep it safe till better times or return it to Mr Wilson himself – who, I suppose, will make it his business to see you at the usual place. If he should be low-spirited at my sending back his picture, you may tell him I have no occasion for a picture while the original continues engraved on my... But no – I would not have you tell him that neither, because there must be an end of our correspondence. I wish he may forget me, for the sake of his own peace, and yet if he should, he must be a barbarous... But 'tis impossible – poor Wilson cannot be false and inconstant. I beseech him not to write to me, nor attempt to see me for some time, for, considering the resentment and passionate temper of my brother Jerry, such an attempt might be attended with consequences which would make us all miserable for life – let us trust to time and the chapter of accidents, or rather to that Providence which will not fail, sooner or later, to reward those that walk in the paths of honour and virtue. I would offer my love to the young ladies, but it is not fit that any of them should know you

have received this letter. If we go to Bath, I shall send you my simple remarks upon that famous centre of polite amusement and every other place we may chance to visit, and I flatter myself that my dear Miss Willis will be punctual in answering the letters of her affectionate,
Clifton, April 6

LYDIA MELFORD

To Doctor Lewis

DEAR LEWIS,

I have followed your directions with some success, and might have been upon my legs by this time had the weather permitted me to use my saddle horse. I rode out upon the Downs last Tuesday, in the forenoon, when the sky, as far as the visible horizon, was without a cloud, but before I had gone a full mile I was overtaken instantaneously by a storm of rain that wet me to the skin in three minutes – whence it came the devil knows, but it has laid me up (I suppose) for one fortnight. It makes me sick to hear people talk of the fine air upon Clifton Downs – how can the air be either agreeable or salutary where the demon of vapours descends in a perpetual drizzle? My confinement is the more intolerable as I am surrounded with domestic vexations. My niece has had a dangerous fit of illness, occasioned by that cursed incident at Gloucester which I mentioned in my last. She is a poor, good-natured simpleton, as soft as butter, and as easily melted – not that she’s a fool. The girl’s parts* are not despicable, and her education has not been neglected (that is to say, she can write and spell, and speak French, and play upon the harpsichord; then she dances finely, has a good figure and is very well inclined), but she’s deficient in spirit, and so susceptible – and so tender, forsooth! Truly, she has got a languishing eye, and reads romances. Then there’s her brother, Squire Jerry, a pert jackanapes, full of college petulance and self-conceit, proud as a German count, and as hot and hasty as a Welsh mountaineer.* As for that fantastical animal, my sister Tabby, you are no stranger to her qualifications. I vow to God, she is sometimes so intolerable that I almost think she’s the Devil incarnate come to torment me for my sins – and yet I am conscious of no sins that ought to entail such family plagues upon me: why the devil should not I shake off these torments at once? I ain’t married to Tabby, thank Heaven! Nor did I beget the other two – let them choose another guardian. For my

part, I ain't in a condition to take care of myself, much less to superintend the conduct of giddy-headed boys and girls. You earnestly desire to know the particulars of our adventure at Gloucester, which are briefly these, and I hope they will go no further: Liddy had been so long cooped up in a boarding school (which, next to a nunnery, is the worst kind of seminary that ever was contrived for young women) that she became as inflammable as touchwood,* and, going to a play in holiday time – 'sdeath, I'm ashamed to tell you! – she fell in love with one of the actors, a handsome young fellow that goes by the name of Wilson. The rascal soon perceived the impression he had made, and managed matters so as to see her at a house where she went to drink tea with her governess. This was the beginning of a correspondence which they kept up by means of a jade of a milliner, who made and dressed caps for the girls at the boarding school. When we arrived at Gloucester, Liddy came to stay at lodgings with her aunt, and Wilson bribed the maid to deliver a letter into her own hands – but it seems Jerry had already acquired so much credit with the maid (by what means he best knows) that she carried the letter to him, and so the whole plot was discovered. The rash boy, without saying a word of the matter to me, went immediately in search of Wilson – and, I suppose, treated him with insolence enough. The theatrical hero was too far gone in romance to brook such usage – he replied in blank verse, and a formal challenge ensued. They agreed to meet early next morning and decide the dispute with sword and pistol. I heard nothing at all of the affair, till Mr Morley came to my bedside in the morning and told me he was afraid my nephew was going to fight, as he had been overheard talking very loud and vehement with Wilson at the young man's lodgings the night before, and afterwards went and bought powder and ball at a shop in the neighbourhood. I got up immediately, and upon enquiry found he was just gone out. I begged Morley to knock up the mayor, that he might interpose as a magistrate, and in the meantime I hobbled after the squire, whom I saw at a distance walking at a great pace towards the city gate. In spite of all my efforts, I could not come up till our two combatants had taken their ground and were priming their pistols. An old house luckily screened me from their view, so that I rushed upon them at once, before I was perceived. They were both confounded, and attempted to make their escape different ways, but Morley, coming up with constables at that instant, took Wilson into custody, and Jerry followed him quietly to the mayor's house. All this

time I was ignorant of what had passed the preceding day, and neither of the parties would discover a tittle of the matter. The mayor observed that it was great presumption in Wilson, who was a stroller,* to proceed to such extremities with a gentleman of family and fortune, and threatened to commit him on the Vagrant Act. The young fellow bustled up with great spirit, declaring he was a gentleman and would be treated as such – but he refused to explain himself further. The master of the company, being sent for and examined touching the said Wilson, said the young man had engaged with him at Birmingham about six months ago, but never would take his salary – that he had behaved so well in his private character as to acquire the respect and goodwill of all his acquaintance, and that the public owned his merit, as an actor, was altogether extraordinary. After all, I fancy, he will turn out to be a runaway apprentice from London. The manager offered to bail him for any sum, provided he would give his word and honour that he would keep the peace, but the young gentleman was on his high ropes,* and would by no means lay himself under any restrictions. On the other hand, Hopefull was equally obstinate, till at length the mayor declared that if they both refused to be bound over, he would immediately commit Wilson as a vagrant to hard labour. I own I was much pleased with Jery's behaviour on this occasion: he said that rather than Mr Wilson should be treated in such an ignominious manner, he would give his word and honour to prosecute the affair no further while they remained at Gloucester. Wilson thanked him for his generous manner of proceeding, and was discharged. On our return to our lodgings, my nephew explained the whole mystery, and I own I was exceedingly incensed. Liddy, being questioned on the subject and very severely reproached by that wildcat, my sister Tabby, first swooned away, then, dissolving in a flood of tears, confessed all the particulars of the correspondence, at the same time giving up three letters, which was all she had received from her admirer. The last, which Jery intercepted, I send you enclosed, and when you have read it, I dare say you won't wonder at the progress the writer had made in the heart of a simple girl utterly unacquainted with the characters of mankind. Thinking it was high time to remove her from such a dangerous connection, I carried her off the very next day to Bristol, but the poor creature was so frightened and fluttered by our threats and expostulations that she fell sick the fourth day after our arrival at Clifton, and continued so ill for a whole week that her life was despaired of. It was

not till yesterday that Doctor Rigge declared her out of danger. You cannot imagine what I have suffered, partly from the indiscretion of this poor child, but much more from the fear of losing her entirely. This air is intolerably cold, and the place quite solitary – I never go down to the well without returning low-spirited, for there I meet with half a dozen poor, emaciated creatures, with ghostly looks, in the last stage of a consumption, who have made shift to linger through the winter, like so many exotic plants languishing in a hothouse, but, in all appearance, will drop into their graves before the sun has warmth enough to mitigate the rigour of this ungenial spring. If you think the Bath water will be of any service to me, I will go thither as soon as my niece can bear the motion of the coach. Tell Barns I am obliged to him for his advice, but don't choose to follow it. If Davis voluntarily offers to give up the farm, the other shall have it, but I will not begin at this time of day to distress my tenants, because they are unfortunate, and cannot make regular payments – I wonder that Barns should think me capable of such oppression. As for Higgins, the fellow is a notorious poacher, to be sure, and an impudent rascal to set his snares in my own paddock, but I suppose he thought he had some right (especially in my absence) to partake of what nature seems to have intended for common use – you may threaten him in my name as much as you please, and if he repeats the offence, let me know it before you have recourse to justice. I know you are a great sportsman, and oblige many of your friends – I need not tell you to make use of my grounds, but it may be necessary to hint that I'm more afraid of my fowling piece than of my game. When you can spare two or three brace of partridges, send them over by the stagecoach, and tell Gwyllim that she forgot to pack up my flannels and wide shoes in the trunk mail. I shall trouble you as usual, from time to time, till at last I suppose you will be tired of corresponding with

Your assured friend,

Clifton, April 17

M. BRAMBLE

To Miss Lydia Melford

Miss Willis has pronounced my doom – you are going away, dear Miss Melford! You are going to be removed, I know not whither! What shall I do? Which way shall I turn for consolation? I know not what I say – all

night long have I been tossed in a sea of doubts and fears, uncertainty and distraction, without being able to connect my thoughts, much less to form any consistent plan of conduct. I was even tempted to wish that I had never seen you, or that you had been less amiable or less compassionate to your poor Wilson, and yet it would be detestable ingratitude in me to form such a wish, considering how much I am indebted to your goodness, and the ineffable pleasure I have derived from your indulgence and approbation. Good God! I never heard your name mentioned without emotion! The most distant prospect of being admitted to your company filled my whole soul with a kind of pleasing alarm! As the time approached, my heart beat with redoubled force, and every nerve thrilled with a transport of expectation, but when I found myself actually in your presence, when I heard you speak, when I saw you smile, when I beheld your charming eyes turned favourably upon me – my breast was filled with such tumults of delight as wholly deprived me of the power of utterance, and wrapped me in a delirium of joy! Encouraged by your sweetness of temper and affability, I ventured to describe the feelings of my heart – even then you did not check my presumption – you pitied my sufferings, and gave me leave to hope – you put a favourable, perhaps too favourable a construction on my appearance – certain it is, I am no player in love – I speak the language of my own heart, and have no prompter but nature. Yet there is something in this heart which I have not yet disclosed – I flattered myself... But I will not – I must not proceed – Dear Miss Liddy! For Heaven's sake, contrive, if possible, some means of letting me speak to you before you leave Gloucester. Otherwise, I know not what will... But I begin to rave again – I will endeavour to bear this trial with fortitude – while I am capable of reflecting upon your tenderness and truth, I surely have no cause to despair – yet I am strangely affected. The sun seems to deny me light – a cloud hangs over me, and there is a dreadful weight upon my spirits! While you stay in this place, I shall continually hover about your lodgings, as the parted soul is said to linger about the grave where its mortal consort lies. I know, if it is in your power, you will task your humanity – your compassion – shall I add, your affection? – in order to assuage the almost intolerable disquiet that torments the heart of your afflicted,

Gloucester, March 31

WILSON

To Sir Watkin Phillips, of Jesus College, Oxon.

Hotwell, April 18

DEAR PHILLIPS,

I give Mansel credit for his invention in propagating the report that I had a quarrel with a mountebank's merry Andrew* at Gloucester, but I have too much respect for every appendage of wit to quarrel even with the lowest buffoonery, and therefore I hope Mansel and I shall always be good friends. I cannot, however, approve of his drowning my poor dog Ponto on purpose to convert Ovid's pleonasm into a punning epitaph: *deerant quoque littora Ponto*.* For that he threw him into the Isis,* when it was so high and impetuous, with no other view than to kill the fleas is an excuse that will not hold water – but I leave poor Ponto to his fate, and hope Providence will take care to accommodate Mansel with a drier death.

As there is nothing that can be called company at the well, I am here in a state of absolute rustication. This, however, gives me leisure to observe the singularities in my uncle's character, which seems to have interested your curiosity. The truth is, his disposition and mine – which, like oil and vinegar, repelled one another at first – have now begun to mix by dint of being beat up together. I was once apt to believe him a complete Cynic,* and that nothing but the necessity of his occasions could compel him to get within the pale of society – I am now of another opinion. I think his peevishness arises partly from bodily pain and partly from a natural excess of mental sensibility – for, I suppose, the mind as well as the body is in some cases endued with a morbid excess of sensation.

I was t'other day much diverted with a conversation that passed in the pump room betwixt him and the famous Doctor L——n,* who is come to ply at the well for patients. My uncle was complaining of the stink occasioned by the vast quantity of mud and slime which the river leaves at low ebb under the windows of the pump room. He observed that the exhalations arising from such a nuisance could not but be prejudicial to the weak lungs of many consumptive patients who came to drink the water. The doctor, overhearing this remark, made up to him, and assured him he was mistaken. He said people in general were so misled by vulgar prejudices that philosophy was hardly sufficient to undeceive them. Then, humming thrice, he assumed a most ridiculous solemnity of aspect, and entered into a learned investigation of the nature of stink.

He observed that stink, or stench, meant no more than a strong impression on the olfactory nerves, and might be applied to substances of the most opposite qualities; that in the Dutch language *stinken* signified the most agreeable perfume as well as the most fetid odour, as appears in Van Vloudel's translation of Horace, in that beautiful ode, '*Quis multa gracilis*', etc. (the words *liquidis perfusus odoribus* he translates *van civet & moschata gestinken*);* that individuals differed *toto caelo* in their opinion of smells – which, indeed, was altogether as arbitrary as the opinion of beauty; that the French were pleased with the putrid effluvia of animal food, and so were the Hottentots* in Africa and the savages in Greenland, and that the Negroes on the coast of Senegal would not touch fish till it was rotten – strong presumptions in favour of what is generally called “stink”, as those nations are in a state of nature, undebauched by luxury, unseduced by whim and caprice; that he had reason to believe the stercoraceous* flavour, condemned by prejudice as a stink, was in fact most agreeable to the organs of smelling, for that every person who pretended to nauseate the smell of another's excretions snuffed up his own with particular complacency – for the truth of which he appealed to all the ladies and gentlemen then present. He said the inhabitants of Madrid and Edinburgh found particular satisfaction in breathing their own atmosphere, which was always impregnated with stercoraceous effluvia; that the learned Doctor B——, in his treatise on the four digestions,* explains in what manner the volatile effluvia from the intestines stimulate and promote the operations of the animal economy. He affirmed the last Grand Duke of Tuscany, of the Medici family, who refined upon sensuality with the spirit of a philosopher, was so delighted with that odour that he caused the essence of ordure to be extracted, and used it as the most delicious perfume; that he himself (the doctor), when he happened to be low-spirited or fatigued with business, found immediate relief and uncommon satisfaction from hanging over the stale contents of a close-stool,* while his servant stirred it about under his nose – nor was this effect to be wondered at when we consider that this substance abounds with the self-same volatile salts that are so greedily smelt to by the most delicate invalids, after they have been extracted and sublimed by the chemists. By this time the company began to hold their noses, but the doctor, without taking the least notice of this signal, proceeded to show that many fetid substances were not only agreeable but salutary, such as asafœtida* and other medicinal gums,

resins, roots and vegetables, over and above burnt feathers, tan pits,* candle-snuffs, etc. In short, he used many learned arguments to persuade his audience out of their senses, and from “stench” made a transition to “filth”, which he affirmed was also a mistaken idea, inasmuch as objects so called were no other than certain modifications of matter, consisting of the same principles that enter into the composition of all created essences, whatever they may be; that in the filthiest production of nature, a philosopher considered nothing but the earth, water, salt and air of which it was compounded; that, for his own part, he had no more objection to drinking the dirtiest ditch water than he had to a glass of water from the Hotwell, provided he was assured there was nothing poisonous in the concrete.* Then, addressing himself to my uncle, “Sir,” said he, “you seem to be of a dropsical habit, and probably will soon have a confirmed ascites.* If I should be present when you are tapped, I will give you a convincing proof of what I assert by drinking without hesitation the water that comes out of your abdomen.” The ladies made wry faces at this declaration, and my uncle, changing colour, told him he did not desire any such proof of his philosophy. “But I should be glad to know,” said he, “what makes you think I am of a dropsical habit.” “Sir, I beg pardon,” replied the doctor, “I perceive your ankles are swelled, and you seem to have the *facies leucophlegmatica*. Perhaps, indeed, your disorder may be oedematous, or gouty, or it may be the *lues venerea*.* If you have any reason to flatter yourself it is this last, sir, I will undertake to cure you with three small pills, even if the disease should have attained its utmost inveteracy. Sir, it is an arcanum* which I have discovered, and prepared with infinite labour. Sir, I have lately cured a woman in Bristol – a common prostitute, sir, who had got all the worst symptoms of the disorder, such as *nodi, tophi* and *gummata, verruæ, cristæ galli* and a serpiginous eruption,* or rather a pocky itch all over her body. By that time she had taken the second pill, sir – by Heaven! – she was as smooth as my hand, and the third made her as sound and as fresh as a newborn infant.” “Sir,” cried my uncle peevishly, “I have no reason to flatter myself that my disorder comes within the efficacy of your nostrum. But this patient you talk of may not be so sound at bottom as you imagine.” “I can’t possibly be mistaken, rejoined the philosopher, “for I have had communication with her three times – I always ascertain my cures in that manner.” At this remark, all the ladies retired to another corner of the room, and

some of them began to spit. As to my uncle, though he was ruffled at first by the doctor's saying he was dropsical, he could not help smiling at this ridiculous confession, and, I suppose, with a view to punish this original, told him there was a wart upon his nose that looked a little suspicious. "I don't pretend to be a judge of those matters," said he, "but I understand that warts are often produced by the distemper, and that one upon your nose seems to have taken possession of the very keystone of the bridge, which I hope is in no danger of falling." L——n seemed a little confounded at this remark, and assured him it was nothing but a common excrescence of the cuticula,* but that the bones were all sound below. For the truth of this assertion he appealed to the touch, desiring he would feel the part. My uncle said it was a matter of such delicacy to meddle with a gentleman's nose that he declined the office – upon which the doctor, turning to me, entreated me to do him that favour. I complied with his request, and handled it so roughly that he sneezed, and the tears ran down his cheeks, to the no small entertainment of the company, and particularly of my uncle, who burst out a-laughing for the first time since I have been with him – and took notice that the part seemed to be very tender. "Sir," cried the doctor, "it is naturally a tender part – but to remove all possibility of doubt, I will take off the wart this very night."

So saying, he bowed with great solemnity all round and retired to his own lodgings, where he applied a caustic to the wart, but it spread in such a manner as to produce a considerable inflammation, attended with an enormous swelling, so that when he next appeared, his whole face was overshadowed by this tremendous nozzle, and the rueful eagerness with which he explained this unlucky accident was ludicrous beyond all description. I was much pleased with meeting the original of a character which you and I have often laughed at in description, and, what surprises me very much, I find the features in the picture which has been drawn for him rather softened than overcharged.

As I have something else to say, and this letter has run to an unconscionable length, I shall now give you a little respite, and trouble you again by the very first post. I wish you would take it in your head to retaliate these double strokes upon

Yours always,

J. MELFORD

To Sir Watkin Phillips, of Jesus College, Oxon.

Hotwell, April 20

DEAR KNIGHT,

I now sit down to execute the threat in the tail of my last. The truth is, I am big with the secret, and long to be delivered. It relates to my guardian, who, you know, is at present our principal object in view.

T'other day I thought I had detected him in such a state of frailty as would but ill become his years and character. There is a decent sort of a woman, not disagreeable in her person, that comes to the well with a poor emaciated child, far gone in a consumption. I had caught my uncle's eyes several times directed to this person, with a very suspicious expression in them, and every time he saw himself observed, he hastily withdrew them, with evident marks of confusion – I resolved to watch him more narrowly, and saw him speaking to her privately in a corner of the walk. At length, going down to the well one day, I met her halfway up the hill to Clifton, and could not help suspecting she was going to our lodgings by appointment, as it was about one o'clock, the hour when my sister and I are generally at the pump room. This notion exciting my curiosity, I returned by a back way, and got unperceived into my own chamber, which is contiguous to my uncle's apartment. Sure enough, the woman was introduced, but not into his bedchamber: he gave her audience in a parlour, so that I was obliged to shift my station to another room – where, however, there was a small chink in the partition through which I could perceive what passed. My uncle, though a little lame, rose up when she came in, and, setting a chair for her, desired she would sit down – then he asked if she would take a dish of chocolate, which she declined with much acknowledgement. After a short pause, he said, in a croaking tone of voice, which confounded me not a little, “Madam, I am truly concerned for your misfortunes, and if this trifle can be of any service to you, I beg you will accept it without ceremony.” So saying, he put a bit of paper into her hand, which she opening with great trepidation exclaimed in an ecstasy, “Twenty pounds! Oh, sir!” – and, sinking down upon a settee, fainted away. Frightened at this fit, and, I suppose, afraid of calling for assistance, lest her situation should give rise to unfavourable conjectures, he ran about the room in distraction, making frightful grimaces, and, at length, had recollection enough to throw a little water in her face, by which application she was brought to herself – but then

her feeling took another turn. She shed a flood of tears, and cried aloud, "I know not who you are, but sure – worthy sir! – generous sir! – the distress of me and my poor dying child... Oh! If the widow's prayers – if the orphan's tears of gratitude can aught avail – gracious Providence! Blessings! Shower down eternal blessings—" Here she was interrupted by my uncle, who muttered in a voice still more and more discordant, "For Heaven's sake, be quiet, madam... consider... the people of the house. 'Sdeath! Can't you—" All this time she was struggling to throw herself on her knees, while he, seizing her by the wrists, endeavoured to seat her upon the settee, saying, "Prithee – good now – hold your tongue—" At that instant, who should burst into the room but our aunt Tabby! – of all antiquated maidens the most diabolically capricious. Ever prying into other people's affairs, she had seen the woman enter, and followed her to the door, where she stood listening, but probably could hear nothing distinctly, except my uncle's last exclamation, at which she bounced into the parlour in a violent rage that dyed the tip of her nose of a purple hue. "Fie upon you, Matt!" cried she. "What doings are these, to disgrace your own character, and disparage your family?" Then, snatching the banknote out of the stranger's hand, she went on: "How now, twenty pounds! Here is temptation with a witness! Good woman, go about your business. Brother, brother, I know not which most to admire – your concupissins* or your extravagance!" "Good God," exclaimed the poor woman, "shall a worthy gentleman's character suffer for an action that does honour to humanity?" By this time, Uncle's indignation was effectually roused. His face grew pale, his teeth chattered and his eyes flashed. "Sister," cried he in a voice like thunder, "I vow to God, your impertinence is exceedingly provoking." With these words he took her by the hand and, opening the door of communication, thrust her into the chamber where I stood, so affected by the scene that the tears ran down my cheeks. Observing these marks of emotion, "I don't wonder," said she, "to see you concerned at the backslidings of so near a relation, a man of his years and infirmities. These are fine doings, truly – this is a rare example, set by a guardian, for the benefit of his pupils. Monstrous! Incongruous!* Sophistical!" I thought it was but an act of justice to set her to rights, and therefore explained the mystery – but she would not be undeceived. "What!" said she. "Would you go for to offer, for to arguefy me out of my senses? Didn't I hear him whispering to her to hold her tongue? Didn't I see her in tears? Didn't I see him struggling to throw

her upon the couch? Oh, filthy! Hideous! Abominable! Child, child, talk not to me of charity. Who gives twenty pounds in charity? But you are a stripling – you know nothing of the world. Besides, charity begins at home – twenty pounds would buy me a complete suit of flowered silk, trimmings and all...” In short, I quitted the room, my contempt for her and my respect for her brother being increased in the same proportion. I have since been informed that the person whom my uncle so generously relieved is the widow of an ensign, who has nothing to depend upon but the pension of fifteen pounds a year. The people of the well house give her an excellent character. She lodges in a garret, and works very hard at plain work* to support her daughter, who is dying of a consumption. I must own, to my shame, I feel a strong inclination to follow my uncle’s example in relieving this poor widow, but, betwixt friends, I am afraid of being detected in a weakness that might entail the ridicule of the company upon,

Dear Phillips,

yours always,

J. MELFORD

Direct your next to me at Bath – and remember me to all our fellow Jesuits.*

To Doctor Lewis

Hotwell, April 20

I understand your hint. There are mysteries in physic, as well as in religion, which we of the profane have no right to investigate. A man must not presume to use his reason unless he has studied the categories and can chop logic by mode and figure. Between friends, I think, every man of tolerable parts ought, at my time of day, to be both physician and lawyer, as far as his own constitution and property are concerned. For my own part, I have had an hospital these fourteen years within myself, and studied my own case with the most painful attention – consequently may be supposed to know something of the matter, although I have not taken regular courses of physiology et cetera et cetera. In short, I have for some time been of opinion (no offence, dear doctor) that the sum of all your medical discoveries amounts to this: that the more you study the less you know. I have read all that has been written on the Hotwells,

and what I can collect from the whole is that the water contains nothing but a little salt and calcareous earth, mixed in such inconsiderable proportion as can have very little, if any, effect on the animal economy. This being the case, I think the man deserves to be fitted with a cap and bells who, for such a paltry advantage as this spring affords, sacrifices his precious time, which might be employed in taking more effectual remedies, and exposes himself to the dirt, the stench, the chilling blasts and perpetual rains that render this place to me intolerable. If these waters, from a small degree of astringency, are of some service in the diabetes, diarrhoea and night sweats, when the secretions are too much increased, must not they do harm in the same proportion where the humours are obstructed, as in the asthma, scurvy, gout and dropsy? Now we talk of the dropsy, here is a strange, fantastical oddity, one of your brethren, who harangues every day in the pump room, as if he was hired to give lectures on all subjects whatsoever. I know not what to make of him – sometimes he makes shrewd remarks; at other times he talks like the greatest simpleton in nature. He has read a great deal, but without method or judgement, and digested nothing. He believes everything he has read, especially if it has anything of the marvellous in it, and his conversation is a surprising hotchpotch of erudition and extravagance. He told me t’other day, with great confidence, that my case was dropsical – or, as he called it, “leucophlegmatic”. A sure sign that his want of experience is equal to his presumption, for, you know, there is nothing analogous to the dropsy in my disorder. I wish those impertinent fellows, with their rickety understandings, would keep their advice for those that ask it. *Dropsy*, indeed! Sure I have not lived to the age of fifty-five, and had such experience of my own disorder, and consulted you and other eminent physicians, so often and so long, to be undeceived by such a... But without all doubt, the man is mad, and, therefore, what he says is of no consequence. I had yesterday a visit from Higgins, who came hither under the terror of your threats, and brought me in a present a brace of hares, which he owned he took in my ground, and I could not persuade the fellow that he did wrong, or that I would ever prosecute him for poaching. I must desire you will wink hard at the practices of this rascallion, otherwise I shall be plagued with his presents, which cost me more than they are worth. If I could wonder at anything Fitz-owen does, I should be surprised at his assurance, in desiring you to solicit my vote for him at the next

election for the county – for him who opposed me on the like occasion with the most illiberal competition. You may tell him civilly that I beg to be excused. Direct your next for me at Bath, whither I propose to remove tomorrow, not only on my own account, but for the sake of my niece, Liddy, who is like to relapse. The poor creature fell into a fit yesterday while I was cheapening* a pair of spectacles with a Jew pedlar. I am afraid there is something still lurking in that little heart of hers, which I hope a change of objects will remove. Let me know what you think of this half-witted doctor’s impertinent, ridiculous and absurd notion of my disorder – so far from being dropsical, I am as lank in the belly as a greyhound, and, by measuring my ankle with a pack thread, I find the swelling subsides every day. From such doctors, good Lord deliver us! I have not yet taken any lodgings in Bath, because there we can be accommodated at a minute’s warning, and I shall choose for myself. I need not say your directions for drinking and bathing will be agreeable to,

Dear Lewis,

yours ever,

MATT. BRAMBLE

PS: I forgot to tell you that my right ankle pits* – a symptom, as I take it, of its being oedematous, not leucophlegmatic.

To Miss Letty Willis, at Gloucester

Hotwell, April 21

MY DEAR LETTY,

I did not intend to trouble you again till we should be settled at Bath, but having the occasion of Jarvis, I could not let it slip, especially as I have something extraordinary to communicate. Oh, my dear companion! What shall I tell you? For several days past there was a Jew-looking man that plied at the wells with a box of spectacles, and he always eyed me so earnestly that I began to be very uneasy. At last, he came to our lodgings at Clifton, and lingered about the door, as if he wanted to speak to somebody. I was seized with an odd kind of fluttering, and begged Win to throw herself in his way, but the poor girl has weak nerves, and was afraid of his beard. My uncle, having occasion for new glasses, called him