

Evelina

by

Fanny Burney

Web-Books.Com

Evelina

Original Dedication.....	4
Original Preface	6
Letter 1	8
Letter 2.....	10
Letter 3.....	13
Letter 4.....	14
Letter 5.....	16
Letter 6.....	17
Letter 7.....	18
Letter 8.....	19
Letter 9.....	20
Letter 10.....	21
Letter 11.....	23
Letter 12.....	28
Letter 13.....	32
Letter 14.....	40
Letter 15.....	44
Letter 16.....	46
Letter 17.....	54
Letter 18.....	58
Letter 19.....	60
Letter 20.....	64
Letter 21.....	68
Letter 22.....	82
Letter 23.....	85
Letter 24.....	93
Letter 25.....	95
Letter 26.....	98
Letter 27.....	100
Letter 28.....	102
Letter 29.....	106
Letter 30.....	107
Letter 31.....	108
Letter 32.....	110
Letter 33.....	112
Letter 34.....	123
Letter 35.....	127
Letter 36.....	128
Letter 37.....	130
Letter 38.....	131
Letter 39.....	133

Letter 40.....	134
Letter 41.....	139
Letter 42.....	140
Letter 43.....	145
Letter 44.....	149
Letter 45.....	152
Letter 46.....	156
Letter 47.....	167
Letter 48.....	172
Letter 49.....	175
Letter 50.....	177
Letter 51.....	183
Letter 52.....	188
Letter 53.....	193
Letter 54.....	196
Letter 55.....	202
Letter 56.....	204
Letter 57.....	205
Letter 58.....	207
Letter 59.....	210
Letter 60.....	212
Letter 61.....	217
Letter 62.....	218
Letter 63.....	222
Letter 64.....	226
Letter 65.....	234
Letter 66.....	236
Letter 67.....	244
Letter 68.....	246
Letter 69.....	250
Letter 70.....	252
Letter 71.....	257
Letter 72.....	258
Letter 73.....	268
Letter 74.....	270
Letter 75.....	272
Letter 76.....	278
Letter 77.....	284
Letter 78.....	295
Letter 79.....	300
Letter 80.....	303
Letter 81.....	308
Letter 82.....	310
Letter 83.....	321
Letter 84.....	322

Original Dedication

To The Authors Of The Monthly And Critical Reviews

GENTLEMEN, The liberty which I take in addressing to you the trifling production of a few idle hours, will doubtless move your wonder, and probably your contempt. I will not, however, with the futility of apologies, intrude upon your time, but briefly acknowledge the motives of my temerity; lest, by a premature exercise of that patience which I hope will befriend me, I should lessen its benevolence, and be accessory to my own condemnation.

Without name, without recommendation, and unknown alike to success and disgrace, to whom can I so properly apply for patronage, as to those who publicly profess themselves Inspectors of all literary performances?

The extensive plan of your critical observations,-which, not confined to works of utility or ingenuity, is equally open to those of frivolous amusement,-and, yet worse than frivolous, dullness,-encourages me to seek for your protection, since,-perhaps for my sins!-it intitles me to your annotations. To resent, therefore, this offering, however insignificant, would ill become the universality of your undertaking; though not to despise it may, alas! be out of your power.

The language of adulation, and the incense of flattery, though the natural inheritance, and constant resource, from time immemorial, of the Dedicator, to me offer nothing but the wistful regret that I dare not invoke their aid. Sinister views would be imputed to all I could say; since, thus situated, to extol your judgment, would seem the effect of art, and to celebrate your impartiality, be attributing to suspecting it.

As magistrates of the press, and Censors for the public,-to which you are bound by the sacred ties of integrity to exert the most spirited impartiality, and to which your suffrages should carry the marks of pure, dauntless, irrefragable truth-to appeal to your MERCY, were to solicit your dishonour; and therefore,-though 'tis sweeter than frankincense, more grateful to the senses than all the odorous perfumes of Arabia, and though

It droppeth like the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath,
I court it not! to your justice alone I am intitled, and by that I must abide. Your engagements are not to the supplicating authors; but to the candid public, which will not fail to crave

The penalty and forfeit of your bond.

No hackneyed writer, inured to abuse, and callous to criticism, here braves your severity;-neither does a half-starved garretteer,

Oblig'd by hunger-and request of friends,
implore your lenity: your examination will be alike unbiassed by partiality and prejudice;-no refractory murmuring will follow your censure, no private interest will be gratified by your praise.

Let not the anxious solicitude with which I recommend myself to your notice, expose me to your derision. Remember, Gentlemen, you were all young writers once, and the most experienced veteran of your corps may, by recollecting his first publication, renovate his first terrors, and learn to allow for mine. For though Courage is one of the noblest virtues of this nether sphere; and though scarcely

more requisite in the field of battle, to guard the fighting hero from disgrace, than in the private commerce of the world, to ward off that littleness of soul which leads, by steps imperceptible, to all the base train of the inferior passions, and by which the too timid mind is betrayed into a servility derogatory to the dignity of human nature! yet is it a virtue of no necessity in a situation such as mine; a situation which removes, even from cowardice itself, the sting of ignominy;-for surely that courage may easily be dispensed with, which would rather excite disgust than admiration! Indeed, it is the peculiar privilege of an author, to rob terror of contempt, and pusillanimity of reproach.

Here let me rest- and snatch myself, while I yet am able, from the fascination of EGOTISM:-a monster who has more votaries than ever did homage to the most popular deity of antiquity; and whose singular quality is, that while he excites a blind and involuntary adoration in almost every individual, his influence is universally disallowed, his power universally contemned, and his worship, even by his followers, never mentioned but with abhorrence.

In addressing you jointly, I mean but to mark the generous sentiments by which liberal criticism, to the utter annihilation of envy, jealousy, and all selfish views, ought to be distinguished.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant,

*** ****

Original Preface

IN the republic of letters, there is no member of such inferior rank, or who is so much disdained by his brethren of the quill, as the humble Novelist; nor is his fate less hard in the world at large, since, among the whole class of writers, perhaps not one can be named of which the votaries are more numerous but less respectable.

Yet, while in the annals of those few of our predecessors, to whom this species of writing is indebted for being saved from contempt, and rescued from depravity, we can trace such names as Rousseau, Johnson,(1)Marivaux, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, no man need blush at starting from the same post, though many, nay, most men, may sigh at finding themselves distanced.

The following letters are presented to the Public-for such, by novel writers, novel readers will be called,-with a very singular mixture of timidity and confidence, resulting from the peculiar situation of the editor; who, though trembling for their success from a consciousness of their imperfections, yet fears not being involved in their disgrace, while happily wrapped up in a mantle of impenetrable obscurity.

To draw characters from nature, though not from life, and to mark the manners of the times, is the attempted plan of the following letters. For this purpose, a young female, educated in the most secluded retirement, makes, at the age of seventeen, her first appearance upon the great and busy stage of life; with a virtuous mind, a cultivated understanding, and a feeling heart, her ignorance of the forms, and inexperience in the manners of the world, occasion all the little incidents which these volumes record, and which form the natural progression of the life of a young woman of obscure birth, but conspicuous beauty, for the first six months after her Entrance into the world.

Perhaps, were it possible to effect the total extirpation of novels, our young ladies in general, and boarding-school damsels in particular, might profit from their annihilation; but since the distemper they have spread seems incurable, since their contagion bids defiance to the medicine of advice or reprehension, and since they are found to baffle all the mental art of physic, save what is prescribed by the slow regimen of Time, and bitter diet of Experience; surely all attempts to contribute to the number of those which may be read, if not with advantage, at least without injury, ought rather to be encouraged than contemned.

Let me, therefore, prepare for disappointment those who, in the perusal of these sheets, entertain the gentle expectation of being transported to the fantastic regions of Romance, where Fiction is coloured by all the gay tints of luxurious Imagination, where Reason is an outcast, and where the sublimity of the Marvellous rejects all aid from sober Probability. The heroine of these memoirs, young, artless, and inexperienced, is

No faultless Monster that the world ne'er saw;

but the offspring of Nature, and of Nature in her simplest attire.

In all the Arts, the value of copies can only be proportioned to the scarcity of originals: among sculptors and painters, a fine statue, or a beautiful picture, of some great master, may deservedly employ the imitative talents of young and

inferior artists, that their appropriation to one spot may not wholly prevent the more general expansion of their excellence; but, among authors, the reverse is the case, since the noblest productions of literature are almost equally attainable with the meanest. In books, therefore, imitation cannot be shunned too sedulously; for the very perfection of a model which is frequently seen, serves but more forcibly to mark the inferiority of a copy.

To avoid what is common, without adopting what is unnatural, must limit the ambition of the vulgar herd of authors: however zealous, therefore, my veneration of the great writers I have mentioned, however I may feel myself enlightened by the knowledge of Johnson, charmed with the eloquence of Rousseau, softened by the pathetic powers of Richardson, and exhilarated by the wit of Fielding and humour of Smollett, I yet presume not to attempt pursuing the same ground which they have tracked; whence, though they may have cleared the weeds, they have also culled the flowers; and, though they have rendered the path plain, they have left it barren.

The candour of my readers I have not the impertinence to doubt, and to their indulgence I am sensible I have no claim; I have, therefore, only to intreat, that my own words may not pronounce my condemnation; and that what I have here ventured to say in regard to imitation, may be understood as it is meant, in a general sense, and not be imputed to an opinion of my own originality, which I have not the vanity, the folly, or the blindness, to entertain.

Whatever may be the fate of these letters, the editor is satisfied they will meet with justice; and commits them to the press, though hopeless of fame, yet not regardless of censure.

1) However superior the capacities in which these great writers deserve to be considered, they must pardon me that, for the dignity of my subject, I here rank the authors of *Rasselas* and *Eloise* as Novelists.

Letter 1

Lady Howard To The Rev. Mr. Villars Howard Grove, Kent.

CAN any thing, my good Sir, be more painful to a friendly mind, than a necessity of communicating disagreeable intelligence? Indeed it is sometimes difficult to determine, whether the relator or the receiver of evil tidings is most to be pitied.

I have just had a letter from Madame Duval; she is totally at a loss in what manner to behave; she seems desirous to repair the wrongs she has done, yet wishes the world to believe her blameless. She would fain cast upon another the odium of those misfortunes for which she alone is answerable. Her letter is violent, sometimes abusive, and that of you!-you, to whom she is under obligations which are greater even than her faults, but to whose advice she wickedly imputes all the sufferings of her much injured daughter, the late Lady Belmont. The chief purport of her writing I will acquaint you with; the letter itself is not worthy your notice.

She tells me that she has, for many years past, been in continual expectation of making a journey to England, which prevented her writing for information concerning this melancholy subject, by giving her hopes of making personal inquiries; but family occurrences have still detained her in France, which country she now sees no prospect of quitting. She has, therefore, lately used her utmost endeavors to obtain a faithful account of whatever related to her ill-advised daughter; the result of which giving her some reason to apprehend, that, upon her death-bed, she bequeathed an infant orphan to the world, she most graciously says, that if you, with whom she understands the child is placed, will procure authentic proofs of its relationship to her, you may send it to Paris, where she will properly provide for it.

This woman is, undoubtedly, at length, self-convicted of her most unnatural behaviour; it is evident, from her writing, that she is still as vulgar and illiterate as when her first husband, Mr. Evelyn, had the weakness to marry her; nor does she at all apologize for addressing herself to me, though I was only once in her company.

Her letter has excited in my daughter Mirvan, a strong desire to be informed of the motives which induced Madame Duval to abandon the unfortunate Lady Belmont, at a time when a mother's protection was peculiarly necessary for her peace and her reputation. Notwithstanding I was personally acquainted with all the parties concerned in that affair, the subject always appeared of too delicate a nature to be spoken of with the principals; I cannot, therefore, satisfy Mrs. Mirvan otherwise than by applying to you.

By saying that you may send the child, Madame Duval aims at conferring, where she most owes obligation. I pretend not to give you advice; you, to whose generous protection this helpless orphan is indebted for every thing, are the best and only judge of what she ought to do; but I am much concerned at the trouble and uneasiness which this unworthy woman may occasion you.

My daughter and my grandchild join with me in desiring to be most kindly remembered to the amiable girl; and they bid me remind you, that the annual visit

to Howard Grove, which we were formerly promised, has been discontinued for more than four years. I am, dear Sir, with great regard, Your most obedient friend and servant, M. HOWARD.

Letter 2

Mr. Villars To Lady Howard Berry Hill, Dorsetshire

YOUR Ladyship did but too well foresee the perplexity and uneasiness of which Madame Duval's letter has been productive. However, I ought rather to be thankful that I have so many years remained unmolested, than repine at my present embarrassment; since it proves, at least, that this wretched woman is at length awakened to remorse.

In regard to my answer, I must humbly request your Ladyship to write to this effect: "That I would not, upon any account, intentionally offend Madame Duval; but that I have weighty, nay unanswerable reasons for detaining her granddaughter at present in England; the principal of which is, that it was the earnest desire of one to whose will she owes implicit duty. Madame Duval may be assured, that she meets with the utmost attention and tenderness; that her education, however short of my wishes, almost exceeds my abilities; and I flatter myself, when the time arrives that she shall pay her duty to her grand-mother, Madame Duval will find no reason to be dissatisfied with what has been done for her."

Your Ladyship will not, I am sure, be surprised at this answer. Madame Duval is by no means a proper companion or guardian for a young woman: she is at once uneducated and unprincipled; ungentle in temper, and unamiable in her manners. I have long known that she has persuaded herself to harbour an aversion for me-Unhappy woman! I can only regard her as an object of pity!

I dare not hesitate at a request from Mrs. Mirvan; yet, in complying with it, I shall, for her own sake, be as concise as I possibly can; since the cruel transactions which preceded the birth of my ward can afford no entertainment to a mind so humane as her's.

Your Ladyship may probably have heard, that I had the honour to accompany Mr. Evelyn, the grandfather of my young charge, when upon his travels, in the capacity of a tutor. His unhappy marriage, immediately upon his return to England, with Madame Duval, then a waiting-girl at a tavern, contrary to the advice and entreaties of all his friends, among whom I was myself the most urgent, induced him to abandon his native land, and fix his abode in France. Thither he was followed by shame and repentance; feelings which his heart was not framed to support; for, notwithstanding he had been too weak to resist the allurements of beauty, which nature, though a niggard to her of every other boon, had with a lavish hand bestowed on his wife; yet he was a young man of excellent character, and, till thus unaccountably infatuated, of unblemished conduct. He survived this ill-judged marriage but two years. Upon his death-bed, with an unsteady hand, he wrote me the following note:

"My friend, forget your resentment, in favour of your humanity;-a father, trembling for the welfare of his child, bequeaths her to your care. O Villars! hear! pity! And relieve me!"

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

