

**Ira and Isabella:
Or the Natural Children, A Novel (1807)**
by William Hill Brown

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Brown had extensive literary ambitions from a young age. He was apparently inspired and encouraged by his aunt, Katherine Byles (1753-1833), granddaughter of the prolific clergyman satirist and poet Mather Byles (1706-1788).¹ By the age of twenty-three or -four, he had (anonymously) authored one of the first US novels, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) and the short tale “Harriot: Or, The Domestick Reconciliation” (*Massachusetts Magazine*, 1789). He also published a number of poems and songs, including the libretto for the comic “The Better Sort: Or, The Girl of Spirit. An Operatical, Comical Farce” (1789) and the tragic *West Point Preserved or the Treason of Arnold* (posthumously published, 1789), and authored two series of essays, published in Boston, under the monikers “The Reformer” (1789-90) and “The Yankee” (1790). All of these works were left unsigned, as were some shorter poems and essays published during a stay in North Carolina, where his sister lived. Brown died suddenly in North Carolina in 1793, and though we do not have firm evidence, it is possible that he wrote *Ira and Isabella* there. In any event, the manuscript remained unpublished until its posthumous appearance in Boston in 1807, apparently promoted by friends or family who wanted to highlight Brown’s literary achievements.

In *Ira and Isabella*, these literary ambitions are abundantly apparent. The preface poses a number of questions focused less

on the moral aim of the novella than on the literary craftsmanship and taste. The narrative voice wonders about the “taste of the times,” the use of fantasy devices (like fairies) or shocking events in plot resolution, the challenges of distinguishing characters’ voices, and the problem of convention and novelty, and concludes with an elaborate, possibly satirical, chart about how to evaluate novelists. In addition to the Spanish Miguel de Cervantes and two Swiss writers (Salomon Gessner, writing in German, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, writing in French), the preface cites six French authors, from the long-popular François Fénelon and Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) to the more contemporary Jean-François Marmontel and Madame de Genlis (Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin). The remaining nine authors are British, from the Scottish Tobias Smollett to the Anglo-Irish Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne to English writers like Samuel Johnson and Samuel Richardson. The range extends from the 16C François Rabelais and Cervantes to Charlotte Turner Smith and Frances Burney, whose novels would have been just recently available in North America. It may be worth noting, as well, that in the quantitative tally of literary qualities offered here, the top five scores are awarded to Johnson (122), Swift (121), Cervantes (117), Voltaire (116), and Sterne (113)--with the exception of Johnson, all writers well-known for their comic works. Throughout *Ira and Isabella*, Brown explicitly references an additional seventeen authors while implicitly alluding to four others. William Shakespeare is mentioned or referenced no less than six times. Familiarity with the literary world is always assumed.

As for the narrative itself, *Ira and Isabella* move through episodes with characters whose names seem to allude to different subgenres of fiction, from the allusive names of 18C comic adventure stories (the Savage family, opening and closing the narrative) to the pastoral romances with more Mediterranean settings (the Lorenzo exchange about true love) to the steamier

¹ For more on Katherine, see Michael J. Eamon, “Don’t Speak to Me, but Write on This’: The Childhood Almanacs of Mary and Katherine Byles,” *New England Quarterly* 85.2 (June 2012), 335-52.

tales of rakes (the Florio exchange about sexuality) and the more realist tales of surreptitious birth (the tale around Dr. Joseph and “the Nurse”). It is as if the novella is playing with different conventions and literary modes from scene to scene. And in sharp contrast to the convention that illicit sexual behavior must be punished with death, the novel takes a jab at “the moral opinions of those novelists” and depicts Lucinda quite happily carrying on with her life.

It is this happy ending that may be most surprising. Much of the familiar literature of the period adhered to sentimental conventions, frequently ending with tragic deaths or, at the very least, with tears. By contrast, *Ira and Isabella* sets up several scenes of emotional tension only to resolve them comically. As is common to much comic writing of the 18C, sexuality is understood as a regular feature of the social world, not simply with Lucinda and Mr. Savage but with Isabella herself. This renders Ira a potentially silly figure, subject throughout the narrative to the corrections of other characters and literary modes. Numerous critics have noted the irony running through the narrative—perhaps Ira’s name itself alludes to this interplay of irony and Isabella.

Suggestions for further reading: In 1894, Arthur W. Brayley, after communication with William Hill Brown’s niece, Rebecca Valentine Thompson, identified Brown as the author of *The Power of Sympathy*: see “The Real Author of ‘The Power of Sympathy,’” in *The Bostonian* (December, 1894), 224-33. Almost forty years later, Milton Ellis confirmed this identity, in part by examining similarities between *Power* and *Ira and Isabella*. For Ellis, *Ira and Isabella* represents an attempt by Brown “to salvage his plot [from *The Power of Sympathy*] by rewriting the story entirely, disguising its identity with the original form, omitting the illustrative episodes which proved injudicious at first, and substituting a happy ending for the appropriate tragic one,” (367); see Ellis, “The Author of

the First American Novel,” *American Literature*, 4:1 (1933), 359-368. Four years later, Ellis edited the first modern edition of *The Power of Sympathy* and his introduction further advanced his argument about the connections between the two novels by suggesting that *Ira and Isabella* “is of particular interest in connection with *The Power of Sympathy* since it represents a second—or possibly earlier—attempt to deal with the same plot, a threatened incestuous marriage resulting from an earlier seduction” (v-vi), see, Ellis ed., *The Power of Sympathy*, William Hill Brown; reproduced from the 1st ed. (Columbia University Press, 1937). Building on the biographical portrait of Brown that Ellis framed, Roger Powell Marshall speculated that *Ira and Isabella* may have been the first American novel “written in North Carolina,” since Brown had moved to Murfreesboro to “to study law with General Davie” early in 1790 (184); see, Marshall, “A Mythical Mayflower Competition: North Carolina Literature in the Half-Century Following the Revolution,” *The North Carolina Historical Review*, 27:2 (1950), 178-192. Terence Martin was the first critic to offer a sustained commentary on *Ira and Isabella* in a 1959 essay which began by observing that while the novel had “succeeded only in being unnoticed,” it was nonetheless full of “many surprises” (238). Devoting most of his attention to considering the chart of authors which concludes Brown’s preface, Martin argues that the novel is notable for its “insight” about “the important relation between the novel and love,” its “unique subtitle,” and the aforementioned “unexplained ‘Scale of Novelists,’” which Brown uses to introduce the text (242). Martin decries what he considers the novel’s “amateurish characterization,” and its “feeble plot enacted with almost a complete lack of temporal-spatial setting, ironic diction, an allusive and playful manner” (242). For Martin, these surprises and flaws “merged into” a text which reflected “the quixotic temper of Brown’s imagination” (242); see Martin, “William Hill Brown’s *Ira and Isabella*,” *The New England Quarterly*, 32:2 (1959), 238-42. In his important

compendium *The Early American Novel* (Ohio State University Press, 1971), Henri Pater argues that “it is not tenable to discuss *Ira and Isabella* exclusively as the reworking of material used in the main plot of *The Power of Sympathy*, with some of its features reversed or given an ironic slant” (251). Such attempts at conflation, Pater suggests, ignore how there are “parallels between the two books which are presumably independent of any burlesque of design and some traits which give *Ira and Isabella* a modest degree of distinctiveness” (251). Cathy Davidson notes that surprisingly “the protagonists of *Ira and Isabella* (who actually go through the marriage ceremony before they are told they are brother and sister) never regret that they cannot consummate their marriage” (29). In underscoring how the text upholds conventional scruples, she concludes that *Ira and Isabella* never “question the morality which forbids their union even though they do lament their ill-fortune,” and she views Brown’s revelations that they are not in fact siblings as a convenient way end the text and avoid having to reconcile the complexities of *Ira and Isabella*’s unconventional yet conventionally-minded situation (29); see Davidson, “*The Power of Sympathy* Reconsidered: William Hill Brown as Literary Craftsman,” *Early American Literature*, 10:1 (1975), 14-29. Philip Young is slightly dismissive of *Ira and Isabella*, when comparing it to Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy*, declaring it “another tale of incest that turns out not to be,” which he considers to be “more than a little satirical, and the fun lies in ‘the fatal Consequences of SEDUCTION’ this time around,” (121); see, Young, “‘First American Novel’: *The Power of Sympathy* in Place,” *College Literature* 11:2 (1984), 115-124. For Anne Dalke, *Ira and Isabella* is unique among the wide range of early American texts which explore the issue of incest. Even as she describes how the novel registers concerns with how “fathers [who] misbehave . . . egregiously” inflict enormous suffering on their children, she concludes that “the book cheerfully dissolves the threat of incest that is viewed so soberly in other early

American fiction. Indeed, *Ira and Isabella* is the only American novel of its period that portrays the incest threat as specious, and so allows a man and woman to marry who have been accused of being brother and sister;” see Dalke, “Original Vice: The Political Implications of Incest in the Early American Novel,” *Early American Literature*, 23:2 (1988), 188-201. In an intriguing essay on the prevalence of the epistolary form in the early Republic, Christian Quendler notes that *Ira and Isabella* serves as an “ironic” (since it declares itself a “A Novel, Founded on Fiction”) “predecessor of the legal framing conventions to disclaim intentional resemblances to living persons” so often associated with novels based on local scandals like Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) or Hannah Webster Foster’s *The Coquette* (1797) (112); see, Quendler, “Framing National, Literary, and Gender Identities in Early American Epistolary Fiction,” *Polysèmes: Revue d’études intertextuelles et intermédiales* (11: 2011), 87-113. In her recent book *Intimacy and Family in Early American Writing*, Erica Burleigh traces how early American writers understood kinship in expansive ways in order to explore the possibilities for national cohesion. As part of her overall argument, she turns to Brown’s *Ira and Isabella* to suggest that it “mobilizes incest . . . as a logical end point for theories of affection in order to suggest that the very structure of intimacy threatens to dissolve the possibility of social relation and reproduction;” see, *Intimacy and Family in Early American Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 9. David Lawrimore has recently argued that Brown’s prefatory catalog of novelists in *Ira and Isabella* reflects “acuity when it comes to the dictates of genre” (703). Lawrimore continues by noting that within *Ira and Isabella*, Brown moves beyond simply “cataloguing and reflexively compares” his own text “to the generic standard” in that “near the novel’s end, for example, the narrator pauses to explain how the happy end of a coquette contradicts the model seduction tale (703). “This subversion,” Lawrimore concludes “is a minor, playful example of how Brown” evinces his awareness

“of the genre conventions and cannily reshapes them to fit his needs (703); see, Lawrimore, “The Novelist as Organic Intellectual: William Hill Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy*, Reconsidered,” *American Literature*, 88:4 (2016), 695–721. Finally, in an essay entitled “The Early American Novel and Sentimentalism,” Philipp Schweighauser argues that Brown’s use of the subtitle “Founded in Fiction,” indicates his refusal “to subordinate the novelist’s right to invent fictional worlds to the demands of morality and religion” (228). As such, Schweighauser contends, “Brown aligns himself with the satirist and parodists that he extols alongside sentimental writers in his prefatory scale of novelists” (228). In this regard, “*Ira and Isabella* oscillates between a pre-modern inclination to make literature serviceable to morality and religion and a modern assertion of the right to fiction” (229). See, Schweighauser, “The Early American Novel and Sentimentalism,” in *Handbook of Transatlantic North American Studies* ed. Julia Straub, (De Gruyter, 2016), 213-233.

IRA AND ISABELLA:
OR THE
NATURAL CHILDREN²

A NOVEL,

FOUNDED IN FICTION.

A POSTHUMOUS WORK.

.....

BY THE LATE
WILLIAM H. BROWN,
OF BOSTON.

.....

“Fictitious histories might be employed for very useful purposes: They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction; for painting human life and manners; for shewing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions; for rendering virtue amiable, and vice odious. DR. BLAIR.³

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY BELCHER AND ARMSTRONG.

.....

1807.

² *Natural children*: a term of art, in British and American law, for illegitimate children

³ The citation here comes from the Scottish cleric and critic Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, published in Britain in 1783, and quickly reprinted in the United States (Philadelphia, 1784). This passage appears in Lecture 37.

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT:

BE it remembered that on the twenty-fifth day of August, in the thirty-second year of the Independence of the United States of America, Belcher & Armstrong, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors in the words following, to wit: "IRA and ISABELLA: or the natural children, a novel, founded in fiction. A posthumous work. By the late William H. Brown of Boston. "Fictitious histories might be employed for very useful purposes: They furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction; for painting human life and manners; for shewing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions; for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious." Dr. Blair."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intitled, An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also to an act intitled, "An act supplementary to an act intitled, An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned: and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.

WILLIAM S. SHAW, *Clerk of the
District of Massachusetts.*

PREFACE.

I WOULD freely give any sophist⁴ the best of my two hats to satisfy my mind in one thing. I am mightily troubled about a literary alternative. The question is this. Shall I lament the perverse taste of the times, or candidly confess my own barrenness of invention?

A sprightly moral-mending Frenchman deplures the loss of fairyism.⁵ It was to lively imaginations a source of innocent pleasure, and the handsomest way in the world of forming agreeable dreams. The fairy which protected Alcidonis, and the familiar demon of Socrates, might furnish hints of harmless narration to a fertile fancy.

Marmontel made this observation in all the festivity of French vivacity... But I, who am not French, either in versatility or by nation, feel myself possessed of abundance of excellent morals, but consolidated gravity. So it would seem that I am more capable of exhibiting my talent by dealing out saturnine⁶ opinions, than pleasing a novel reader by a sublime anticlimax of

⁴ *Sophist*: a learned person, though often with negative connotations of error through overcomplication

⁵ *Sprightly...Frenchman*: an allusion to Jean-François Marmontel, a French writer popular in Britain and the United States in the late 18C. Marmontel compiled his *Contes Moraux* (translated as *The Moral Tales*), over the course of the late 1750s; they circulated in English translations from 1764 on. In one of these tales, "The Four Phials. Or, The Adventures of Alcidonis of Megara," the narrator begins by noting "There is nothing I regret more than the loss of Fairy-land. It furnished a lively imagination with a source of innocent pleasures and the most decent manner of forming agreeable dreams. We therefore find that the oriental climates were formerly stocked with Genii and Fairies." Marmontel's narrator goes on to cite the "daemon" of Socrates (understood as a kind of spirit or voice) and the fairy who gives Alcidonis four phials. As the fairy explains, "Would you be desperately in love, drink of the purple Phial; of the rose-colour, if you would only gently dip into love and pleasure; of the blue, when you would enjoy it without inquietude, without intoxication; and of the white, to return again to your natural state." We quote here the 1764 translation by Charles Denis and Robert Lloyd.

⁶ *Saturnine*: gloomy

ingenious description. Yet, may be, like certain political, poetical, mercantile and amorous geniuses, I am a little mistaken in my own character.

I lament the want of machinery⁷ in modern novels. But most of all I grieve for the extinction of the eastern manner: There could I have shown myself in all my glory; there could I have fired away in periods sonorous, lofty, musical and unmeaning, and proved myself a Confucius or Xixzoffou⁸ by the orientality of sentiments, grand, obscure, magnificent and incomprehensible. Genii and giants, magii and magicians, invincible castles and palaces of enchantment, should have spontaneously arisen from one stroke of my immortal wand. Groves of coral should have been visible in the transparent stream of my descriptions, and rocks of diamond should have blazed in every page.

Alas! that the perverse fashion of the present day should stretch forth the hand of interdiction to bar my passage to glory, honour and to a long list of convenient et-cæteras.

I am loth to find fault with the world, because I am persuaded the world must and will maintain me. To despise myself for lack of faculty, is mending the matter very little. Would it disconcert the economy of a critical countenance, to say, I have taken for my own use and behoof, a style peculiar to myself? It may be denominated the COMPOSITE style, as it partakes of the English relation, and the French dialogue. To bring about this end requires a novelty: That the character be so strongly designated that the reader may know who is the speaker, not only by the insertion of said he and said she, but, in some small degree, by the uniformity of the speaker's sentiments. But alas! here is another mortifying requisition. To effect this thing demands genius. Some of the sagacious and indefatigable commentators on the divine Shakespeare, have, to their eternal honour, discovered, that if the names of his dramas were omitted, a reader of common

⁷ *Machinery*: plot contrivances and devices, on the analogy of stage apparatuses used in theatrical productions.

⁸ *Confucius or Xixzoffou*: Confucius, the Chinese philosopher and political figure (551-479 BCE), was becoming increasingly known and admired in 18C Europe. The identity of Xixzoffou is unclear, but it may be a misprinted attempt to render the name Confucius (or Kong Fuzi) more phonetically.

capacity might discern for whom any speech was designed; and for this plain reason, because the characters and sentiments walk on through five acts, and strut their hour upon the stage in the most amicable sympathy.⁹

Modern novelists, indeed, have not been so happy as to outrun Mr. Shakespeare in this literary race. But, leaving both sentiment and person as above or beneath their comprehension, have endeavoured with bold attempt to make a verbal distinction of character.... which is a difference known only by provincial accent; false English; favourite words; idiomatical barbarity; vernacular vulgarity; insipid tautology¹⁰; discordant technicals; disgusting prophanity; domestic prejudices, or foreign unintelligibility.

I have not the least suspicion that any part of the following tale will be ranked with Shakespeare's art of designating characters; (except a few lucky hits here and there!) notwithstanding which I have very often left out, as supernumerary,¹¹ the said he and replied she, common to most retailers of dialogue!

Thus it comes to pass, that because I am only an untutored, though self-sufficient historian of fiction, I am unwarrantably forbidden, by the corrupt minds of idle readers, to introduce fairies and enchanters as a help to enable me—to make a book. I might also complain that I am denied the assistance of the heathen mythology or the Rosicrucian system.¹² How handy would these have been to have extricated a hero or heroine from the snares of embarrassment and incertitude! And how often, for want of a god, goddess,

⁹ *Commentators on the divine Shakespeare*: probably a reference to Alexander Pope, who, in the preface to his 1725 edition of Shakespeare's works, wrote, "But every single character in *Shakespeare* is as much an Individual as those in *Life* itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike.... To this life and variety of Character we must add the wonderful Preservation of it; which is such throughout his plays that had all the Speeches been printed without the very names of the persons I believe one might have apply'd them with certainty to every speaker."

¹⁰ *Tautology*: repetition, redundancy

¹¹ *Supernumerary*: excessive, extra

¹² *Rosicrucian system*: a fictitious secret society and cosmology described in some fictional and conspiracy texts from the 17C on. The name comes from the "rosy cross" mentioned in the next paragraph.

*sylphid*¹³ or *gnome*, do our modern writers of elaborate adventures make the most wretched, deplorable, blundering, *eclaircissements*,¹⁴ catastrophes and denouements, because we are denied these happy means to produce conclusions. I have in the words of some authors been witness to a surprise, which was not surprising, and have seen discoveries which were known for a hundred pages before they were made.

It would have been a violent presumption in me, who am yet without celebrity, to have designed a new creation of supernatural agents; a novel machinery. 'Tis a task for a Homer, the framer of the *Rosy Cross*, and for the maker of *Caliban*.¹⁵ Wherefore, finding it inexpedient to soar on the pinions¹⁶ of invention, I will, as I have done, content myself by a moderate excursion into the region of style.

What is a novel without novelty? Is it not what is every day presented from the polite bookseller to the hands of the fancy-loving fair? Is it not a second edition of scenes and conversations to be viewed and perused by those EYES, which are worthy to inspire enthusiasm in the bosom of the poet, and to exile gravity from the heart of the philosopher?....Eyes more happily employed in darting the smiles of encouragement to obsequious¹⁷ merit, and in beaming complacency¹⁸ to the love-excited passion of honest virtue. Eyes which had better guide the fingers of industry through the mazes of tapestry, and teach the stitches of embroidery to rival the tints of the painter.

There is one truth concerning novels, which is in our time pretty well established; none I presume will controvert the authenticity of my remark, that the foundation of these elegant fabricks is laid on the passion of love. I except the wonderful history of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Whatever precepts or examples are given for the government of the young inclinations, the tender affections, the infantine offspring of the heart,

are highly important, and merit a scrutinizing inspection. The passions grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength;¹⁹ it is a duty therefore to discourage the unruly, and curb the headstrong. It is incumbent upon the other hand, and which stands beyond the reach of argument, that to allure the untutored mind to the practice of virtue by an example which is rewarded, and to deter it from vice by the representation of its misery, are means often found adequate to win vivacity to the side of prudence, and fix sensibility in the cause of discretion. Thus far I am the friend of novels, and thus far I am a novelist. The field of this species of writing is extensive, and it would be worth while to see how the different romance and novel writers in Europe have excelled in their different branches, and by a comparison of their various merits determine who are the strongest in genius, satire, knowledge, taste, style and pathos.

But I have already written a desultory preface three times longer than I intended. I will therefore for the sake of brevity condense my thoughts upon this important point in the following

¹³ *Sylphid*: a young, airy spirit, typically feminine.

¹⁴ *Eclaircissements*: explanations or clarifications, from the French

¹⁵ *Maker of Caliban*: Shakespeare, who introduces Caliban in *The Tempest*.

¹⁶ *Pinions*: birds' wings

¹⁷ *Obsequious*: eager to please

¹⁸ *Complacency*: self-satisfaction

¹⁹ POPE. [Note in original: the line is from Pope's "Essay on Man," Epistle 2, line 136.]

SCALE OF NOVELISTS.

Authors.	Taste.						
	Genius	Satire.	Knowledge	Intellig.	Imagin	Style.	Pathos.
Cervantes	19	19	17	16	18	15	13
Rabelais	15	18	17	15	13	10	7
Le Sage	14	17	12	12	14	11	6
Rousseau	16	10	13	15	15	17	16
Fenelon	16	7	15	16	14	17	14
Marmontel	14	10	11	15	15	17	16
Smollet	11	16	10	9	14	6	5
Richardson	19	11	12	16	17	17	18
Swift	18	19	17	18	18	17	14
De Foe	11	4	10	10	15	6	10
Sterne	18	15	14	14	16	17	19
Miss Burney	14	11	12	16	16	16	17
Miss Smith	13	9	12	15	15	14	9
Johnson	18	15	19	18	18	19	15
Gesner	10	6	11	15	15	16	16
Mad. Genlis	12	10	10	12	13	15	12
Dr. Dodd	11	9	12	10	13	10	13
Voltaire	18	17	18	16	18	16	13 ²⁰

²⁰ Miguel de **Cervantes** (1547-1616) authored *Don Quixote*, a comic novel which enjoyed popularity in English-language translations throughout the 18C. François **Rabelais** (1494-1553) was the author of the bawdy, comical books about the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel. Alain-René **Lesage** (1668-1747) wrote the comic, picaresque novel *Gil Blas*. François **Fénelon** (1651-1715), a Roman Catholic archbishop, was best known for *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (*The Adventures of Telemachus*), a didactic novel popular in English throughout the 18C. Jean-François **Marmontel** (1723-1799) was possibly the most popular French writer in the postrevolutionary United States, frequently excerpted in US periodicals. He was best known for the *Contes Moraux* (mentioned earlier in Brown's preface) and *Bélisaire* (*Belisarius*). Stéphanie Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin (1746-1830), best known in the English-speaking world as **Madame de Genlis**, was an author of didactic fiction, and a major critic of Enlightenment thought in France. She, too, was frequently reprinted in US periodicals. François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778), known internationally as **Voltaire**, was one of the most influential Enlightenment writers, known for short works like *Candide*, *Micromegas*, and *L'Ingénu* (translated as *The Sincere Huron*), as well as his historical writings. Salomon **Gessner** (1730-1788) was a Swiss painter and author, who wrote in German. He was best known for pastoral poetry, the pastoral novel *Daphnis*, and his adaptation of the Inkle and Yarico story, an interracial love story popular throughout the 18C. Jean-Jacques **Rousseau** (1712-1778), who wrote in French, was known for his political and philosophical writings (most notably *The Social Contract*), his autobiographical works (his *Confessions* and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*), and his novels treating education, above all *Julie, or the New Heloise* (translated in the 18C as *Eloisa*) and *Emile, or On Education* (translated as *Emilius and Sophia*). The Scottish Tobias **Smollett** (1721-1771) was the author of numerous picaresque, comic novels (*The Adventures of Roderick Random* and *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle*, for example), as well as travelogues and histories. Samuel **Richardson** (1689-1761) was the English author of the epistolary sentimental novels *Pamela*, *Clarissa*, and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*. The Irish Jonathan **Swift** (1667-1745) wrote numerous satirical works in poetry and prose, most notably *Gulliver's Travels*. Daniel **Defoe** (1660-1731) authored several first-person novels, most notably *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*. The Irish writer Laurence **Sterne** (1713-1768) authored the enormously popular *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. The English Frances **Burney** (1752-1840) authored several comic novels, including *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, both of which appeared in US editions during the 1790s. Charlotte Turner **Smith** (1749-1806), English poet and novelist, was known for her popular translation of scandal stories, *The Romance of Real Life*, and the gothic *Emmeline; or The Orphan of the Castle*. Samuel **Johnson** (1709-1784), the English critic, was known for his *Rambler* essays, his novel *Rasselas*, and such critical works as *Lives of the Poets*. William **Dodd** (1729-1777) was an English clergyman known for his commentary and the racy novel *The Sisters*. He became most notorious for the forgery he committed to maintain his extravagant lifestyle, and for which he was convicted and executed.

IRA AND ISABELLA.

The web of human life, says the prince of dramatick poets, is a mingled yarn.²¹ A metaphor is not necessary to convince men that the empire of life is divided by good and ill. How easily are we persuaded of this truth! How comprehensible to the meanest capacity are the metaphysicks of misfortune! We feel. We judge.

Some calamities are inevitable. Fortitude is the recipe for these. A determination to acquiesce in the mandate of necessity extracts the sting of repining, smooths the forehead of discontent, and dissipates the clouds of anxiety from the prospect of mental vision.

Of all the children of this world, be they introduced to their existence in what manner they may, the least enviable is he, who, by the illicit commerce of the sexes, is smuggled into life; who passes through the world with a borrowed name, and is entered on the books of custom, not as a *son*, but a *bastard*.

With a spirit superiour to undeserved contempt, the poet Savage presumed to enumerate the imaginary blessings to which he was heir, and in the warmth of poetical enthusiasm to exclaim:

“Blest be the bastard's birth”.....²²

The exultation was short: Visionary frenzy died away, and he remained enveloped in the reality of mortifying reflection.

What has a man in possession which endears him to himself, and reconciles him to a quarrelsome life? The tender charities of father, son and brother. These were ties unknown to Ira and Isabella. Without these, existence was to them a burthen.

There was not a person whom they could address by the endearing appellation of parent. They were happy in their friendships, but not independent, and though guarded from penury by the hand of patronage, their origin was circumscribed by the curtain of obscurity.

An elderly matron, who had been the nurse of Isabella's infancy, and the directress of her childhood, still continued to bestow attention on her quondam²³ ward, and confer counsel upon the conduct of the woman.

Isabella had been removed from the management of this lady to the superintendence of the domestick concerns of Mrs. Savage, a lady whose intrinsic merit rendered her worthy of the elevated and important sphere in which she moved. Here Isabella had frequent opportunities of improving her mind, which was susceptible of cultivation; and of ameliorating²⁴ her heart, which was feeling by nature.

To these attractions, invisible as they are to the vulgar eye, she superinduced those which are less abstract. Her stature was of the middle size; her person agreeable, easy with dignity, and graceful without affectation. Criticks in beauty, though they might not discover that regularity of feature and delicacy of complexion which are supposed to be the constituents of a handsome face, might immediately observe a soul, which broke out at the eyes and illuminated her whole countenance. She was remarkable for a frankness of disposition, for a capability of pleasing and being pleased, which were particularly admired by Ira, because it met in him a congenial sincerity, and a mutual talent for the disinterested politeness²⁵ of nature.

Ira was a youth, who, though of amiable deportment, had much meekness, but no humility. Steady, tractable²⁶, ambitious of

²¹ *Web*...: A paraphrase from Shakespeare's "All's Well That Ends Well," Act IV, Scene 3: "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together..." (lines 71-72).

²² *Blest*...: the line is from "The Bastard" (1728) by the English poet Richard Savage (c. 1697-1743).

²³ *Quondam*: former

²⁴ *Ameliorating*: improving

²⁵ *Politeness*: polish and refinement

²⁶ *Tractable*: compliant

honesty, and despising dissimulation, he had more morals than manners. Had he been a politician, he would have formed himself upon the model of Sidney or Andrew Marvell, rather than upon the example of Machiavel or Lord Chesterfield.²⁷ In early youth, his ruling passion had been friendship. Open, liberal²⁸, candid, and communicative, he had placed his delight in that passion which is only characterized by a reciprocal exchange of good offices. Unknowing or unseeking the more *earthly* pleasures of sense, it was for the *soul* of Isabella he acknowledged a friendship.

My dear madam, said he with a more earnest tone of voice than usual, to Mrs. Savage, you cannot conceive how truly I am delighted with every motion and act of the graceful Isabella. No longer I feel in my heart an unmeaning, and uninteresting vacancy. I behold her, and the void is filled up. She is the *friend*, whom I have, in time passed, entertained a presentiment that I should find, and to whom I am firmly persuaded I should ever remain indissolubly tied by every *sentiment of esteem*. How happy should I think myself, were I allowed the privilege of calling in daily, and being blest with her *conversation!*

He was indulged with several of these conversations. He was entranced in her presence; he was charmed by the meaning so clearly expressed, in words, the very sound of which sunk into his unresisting heart. When he departed he found himself enveloped in melancholy. This was something inexplicable to the deluded youth. He had never experienced sensations so anxious

²⁷ *Sidney*: Philip Sidney (1554-1586), English poet and author of the influential prose romance *Arcadia*; *Andrew Marvell* (1621-1678), English poet and satirist; *Machiavel*, or Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), an Italian/Florentine political theorist associated with cynical maneuvering; *Lord Chesterfield*, Philip Stanhope, fourth earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773), English political figure best known for authoring *Letters to his Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman* (published posthumously, 1774), and long criticized as a cynical and dishonest guide to social success. Chesterfield frequently advocates concealing one's feelings (see the reference on page 20).

²⁸ *Liberal*: generous

and perturbed in the absence of his friends. Interview had succeeded to interview, and every interregnum²⁹ was supplied by her ideal presence.

“What ails me?” said Ira to his friend Lorenzo. “The devil must be in you,” answered he; “the god of sleep disdains to visit your eyelids, and you give no exercise to your masticators³⁰; are you—in love?” “I really believe I am,” replied the youth, “and I must cure myself with all possible haste.” So he went off, to pass the evening with Isabella.

Too late for the security of his heart, he now discovered the source of his uneasiness: That he had drank from the eyes of Isabella, those draughts of love which intoxicated his senses.

“How is your health?” said Lorenzo with much solicitude, early the next morning. “You know me better than I am acquainted with myself; it must be as you insinuate, and I am irremediably in love.” “Poor fellow!” “I beg you would not pity me, Sir.” “Why so formal and proud, Ira? I know very well the situation of your mind; you are sick.”—“Heart sick.” “You have unfortunately looked upon Isabella with too amorous an eye—and indeed I am really of opinion she is a woman capable of inspiring a real passion. You have heard with rapture her words, you have seen with desire”—“Desire!” “Yes, desire; you sigh to possess”—“Possess! Lorenzo why do you reiterate the same idea? *desire, possess!* you shock my delicacy!”—“Ha, ha, is it come to this, my dear Platonick? Do you think you have been conversing with an angel? No, my friend, a mere mortal, depend upon it. Why will you tie yourself to a foolish old system, unphilosophical, unnatural? To repeat to me your stupid notions of false delicacy, or rather untutored virtue, is ridiculous in the extreme; absolutely fighting against Nature herself, the informer of our hearts, the directress of our passions. Learn, my friend, a little self-

²⁹ *Interregnum*: gap

³⁰ *Masticators*: a joking reference to teeth

knowledge a little knowledge of the world, and to unlearn a great deal of your book-knowledge. For books only instruct us in the interests of human nature, the duties of philanthropy, or, in other words, to regard others, and forget ourselves. When a young man has taught himself to credit all those disinterested doctrines, and launches upon the ocean of life, how miserably disappointed will he be in his enthusiastic expectations. He enters upon the stage a philanthropist, he makes his exit a misanthrope.³¹ How painful is this change of character! Regulate your conduct early; make up your opinions with judgment and observation, and adopt a system which will be fixed, firm, unalterable. To effect this happy character, strike a blow at the root. Begin this minute. Remember, in your dealings with men, that all love is self-love³², and you will never repent of being deceived; you will never complain of those sons of craft and collusion, who tender the hand of friendship, but leave their prey the dupe of credulity. Be not deceived by apparent excellencies. The world has infinitely more show and sound, than real sense and stability. Merit is the last thing regarded; goodness has assigned her a very obscure nook for her habitation. What is a head good for, now-a-days, unless it be powdered? And what is a heart worth, except it be covered with a silk waistcoat, and a ruffled-bosomed shirt? Not one woman in ten thousand would deem it worth the conquest!”

Ira was thunderstruck at this harangue of Lorenzo. “Alas! I stand a very indifferent chance to fall into the good graces of Isabella. I am not so happy as you, my friend, either in the necessary knowledge of the human character, or in the gay, futile, insignificant, but sometimes needful acquirements of dress, address, and the graces. I am not a gallant.”³³ “I am extremely

concerned to hear it, interrupted Lorenzo, for without gallantry and address, I despair of your success in any amour.” “But, continued Ira, I know my duty as a citizen, a friend, and a christian.” And surely one would imagine that such an one would not be reduced to the grave of despair in matters of love, because he would more readily understand the important duties of a husband and father.” “Alas! Ira, my misguided companion, how have you deceived yourself! I perceive in you, notwithstanding, a good heart and a good head; but I deplore your misfortune, in not boasting the advantage of a fashionable education. I now, more than ever, lament that your youth was unprotected by parental care; that darkness overshadowed your birth, and that, of consequence, your youth and manhood are without light. I see in you a good soil, but uncultivated. I look upon you as a diamond at the bottom of the ocean. Good morning, my friend, I wish you well with all my soul.” Lorenzo concluded his address with a look and accent of infinite compassion; and left the amazed lover standing in the street without motion, *thinking himself* into a statue.

The next time Ira visited Isabella, he was more thoughtful than common. “What disconcerts your gaiety?” said she, in a cadence the sweetest in the world. “I have had a conversation with Lorenzo, and he has persuaded me of a truth, of which I have been hitherto ignorant. I love, I adore you, Isabella.”— “Have you just discovered this truth,” said she smiling. “I am full of uneasiness, anxiety and solicitude. I think of you, and am seized with a tremor. My eyes meet yours and my sensations are undescribable.” “You have told me the same thing by words and actions for more than three weeks.” “Is it possible? I have?”— Isabella was a little confused, but seeing Ira more so, very generously satisfied his scruples, and quieted his apprehensions. Women are more expert in love affairs than men, and were all the sex as frank in their dispositions as Isabella, ten times more men would fall into the inextricable snares of enticing love, than are now entangled by its delusive influence. Coquetry is a savage that

³¹ *Misanthrope*: a hater of people

³² *All love is self-love*: a principle associated with the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus but also, in the 18C, with François, Duc de la Rochefoucauld (1613-1680), whose *Maxims and Moral Reflections* was frequently reprinted in English.

³³ *Gallant*: a man of fashion, from the French

kills more than it conquers. It delights to glut the eye of cruelty with mountains of the dead, while it neglects the true interest of society and the sex, which is only effected by naturalizing the captive, and giving him the manners of the victor. Isabella, whose only wish was to secure the heart of her lover, made no secret of her tenderness for a man of worth.

“I see your emotions, I perceive your sensibility. These things cannot be done and acknowledged without reciprocal feeling. Do you not draw favourable inferences when my hand trembles in yours? When our eyes meet, do you not read something in mine, tender and sorrowful? My good friend, is it any harm to love? If so, are we not equally guilty?”

Best of women! you overpower my senses, when I would express my gratitude, my voice denies its assistance. Yet are you not deceived in my passion, I have been led insensibly into the snares of love, and have attached myself to you without volition. Friendship between our hearts was an illusive barrier. Prompted to visit you by the irresistible force of Nature, I have imperceptibly engaged my heart, and nothing shall wrest it from you. I have been called a platonick, but your eyes have disconcerted the purity of *celestial conversation* and friendship is adsorbed in love. My REASON demonstrates that in you I admire the *friend*: my PASSION persuades me, that, with infinitely greater ardour, I love the—*woman*.

Isabella *blushed*; but it was not the blush of confusion, for she was not embarrassed; neither was it the blush of resentment, for she was not angry; neither was it the blush of shame, for she loved to hear truth. Was it the blush of wantonness?³⁴ I am loth to think it, and yet why should Isabella be more *unnatural* in my hands than Juliet in those of Shakespeare. When the ghostly father has proposed a scheme for her union with Romeo,

“Then hies the *wanton blood* up in her cheek.”

³⁴ *Wantonness*: lustfulness. The quotation that follows is slightly modified from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, scene 5, line 63

Who without the imputation of dulness, ignorance, or insensibility shall undertake to delineate Nature, and deviate into error, by concealing the consequences of the passions?

It was now manifest to Ira, that Isabella was possess of a feeling heart, and was in fact a woman, and not, as Lorenzo had said, a pure intelligent spirit. And when he comprehended the true state of his own heart, and was convinced of the faith and confidence of the only woman he loved, to the perturbations he once felt succeeded the happiest moments of his life. Without a rival, he was without jealousy; without discord, he was without apprehension.

A mutual inclination characterized the progress of this amour. Their propensities were uniform, their manners similar; some persons imagined that they looked alike, and others that they were inspired with one soul.

This intimate connexion was observed by the nurse, who, in consequence of her observation, held a particular interview with Isabella. “Beware of young men;” said the matron, “they have always at hand a fund of fine sayings, of illusive lies, and unmeaning compliments, which are, upon every occasion, poured forth without reserve. They flatter where praise is not due, and the trade fitted to their talents, is deception. Hope built upon the basis of promise is an unstable fabric. Let it not fall upon your head. Take counsel betimes, and avoid the conversation of young men.”

Isabella’s judgment did not coalesce with that of the nurse. Frank and undisguised herself, she was induced to believe in the sincerity and honour of Ira. Love inspires eloquence and extends liberality: the young lady found her heart willing to prompt, and her tongue to plead, the cause of youth on a general principle.

“I confess my astonishment, said she to the nurse, to find you possessed of such little knowledge of *mankind*. Rigid, prejudiced and credulous, your maxims are the opinions of a

cloister. By sending into the world bad characters of men, we prepare them a model for bad behaviour. Evil example is not more dangerous than improper and undeserved contempt. If a man finds his exertions to acquire confidence ineffectual, even by the practice of virtue, he will change his character, and revenge himself on the world, by practicing the vices charged to his account. What good, then, can possibly accrue to society by the publication of your sentiments, and by making the sexes mutual enemies? Are they formed for the destruction of each other? As though perdition, or annihilation beamed from the eye of either party, must they fly all intercourse? Certainly not. Why then abandon our inclinations prompted by reason and nature, to follow the footsteps of what caprice and ignorance may call duty?"

The nurse kept up the conversation, but not the argument. She presumed not to give reasons, her talents lay in giving advice. "Have a guard upon your conduct in the company of those sons of dissembling, who are framed for our destruction. Be deaf to their discourse; be reserved to their advances; indifferent to their insinuations; blind to their seeming excellences; cold to their importunities; unmoved at their flatteries; undisturbed at their oaths; calm to their raging. If they presume to speak of matrimony, give the reins to your indignation, and repay their presumption with the full force of your merited resentment."

"O unreasonable heterodox!"³⁵ cried Isabella, stifling the laugh which was just breaking out. "How various are our ideas concerning matrimonial offers. Such protestations have I heard, but never with anger. I have attended a discourse on marriage, the most tender in the world, and I listened to it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable!"—"Perhaps you love the preacher!" said

the nurse. "There may be truth in that; for what can procure attention like a prepossession in favour of the orator?"

The matron paused at this instance of Isabella's unguarded sincerity; but collecting all her might, made another essay upon her young friend's arguments. "The connexion for life is important. It should never be finally adjusted without the result of mature consideration, the advice of age, and the consent of friends."

"I am not altogether convinced of this. A mutual passion, a similarity of situation, a congeniality of taste, and a reciprocation of temper are undoubtedly requisite, and stand a fairer chance of success, than the things you mention. Can friends advise us to be happy? Or can the heart obey the command? Happiness is within ourselves, not in the opinions of others."

Policy should ever govern the management of concerns which interest the peace and tranquillity of life. The matron evidently possess a fund of this necessary collusion.³⁶ In the present conversation, it may be seen that the advances of this policy had been interrupted by the honest simplicity of Isabella. The nurse was about communicating a piece of intelligence highly consequential, as she thought to the welfare and safety of her foster-child. She had introduced the subject by an observation, which Isabella had endeavoured to combat. To suppress the intention of her visit any longer she now thought an unpardonable crime.

"Ira is not the young man for your husband. It is in vain, to ask advice of my age or experience. Even I, though the only mother whom you know, am not altogether capable of granting a sanction to such a preposterous union." "Preposterous! You understand not the meaning of words." "There is a gentleman whose advice and consent must be first forthcoming. Doctor

³⁵ *Heterodox*: person of unusual opinions

³⁶ *Collusion*: ambiguity in reasoning

Joseph is to you a guardian angel; he guides your steps, remaining invisible.”

No person breathing, of either sex, was ever blest with a more independent spirit than Isabella. “Why should I trouble my head concerning Doctor Joseph? With him I have never had the honour of a personal interview. If he was appointed my guardian, why does he not condescend to tell me so? Haughty in his carriage, distant in his manner, he has the reputation of pride. Am I too contemptible for the sublime honour, of receiving the dignified advice of this wonderful personification of loftiness? Who feels more the connecessity of a friend than an orphan? And am not I one of this hapless description? This is the tale you tell me. Left in infancy, without a parent to protect from the assaults of danger, or a house to defend from the beating of the tempest, you received me to the bosom of safety, and nourished my tender years with the milk of benevolence. Are obligations due from me to any one, they are unquestionably owing to you; to you, who reared the suckling, and INSTILLED THE ELEMENTARY IDEAS OF USEFUL AND POLITE KNOWLEDGE INTO THE HEAD AND HEART OF THE FROLICKSOME GIRL; RESTRAINING LEVITY WITHOUT BREAKING THE SPIRIT, AND WATERING THE PLANT OF GENIUS WITH WELL-TIMED APPLAUSE, WITHOUT DROWNING IT WITH FLATTERY. When I was able to work, you fixed my situation in this house; where, amidst the smiles of an amiable family, I am removed from the apprehensions of penury, and indulged with privileges above my expectation.”

“Alas!” sighed the nurse, “I grant the truth of all you have said. But it is now time you should be informed, that I was but the organ of the Doctor, and, being the subject of his will, have directed your steps agreeable to his desire. He knows you better than you know him.”

Isabella remained petrified with astonishment. A wretched, distressing alternative presented itself to her imagination. “Shall I abandon Ira, whom I love, to follow and obey Doctor Joseph, whom I know not?”

“Why sing of Ira in this uncommon strain? Is he not as well known to me as to any human being? Was I not the nurse of his infancy, as well as that of thine? His history will be very interesting to you, and hereafter you shall hear it.” “It will please me mightily; for whatever relates to him, very intimately concerns me.”

The matron took her leave, and left the young lady in that gloomy, perplexed situation, which is the invariable attendant of uncertainty. In the evening this melancholy was dissipated by the presence of Ira. To him she communicated every circumstance of her conversation with the nurse.

The lover, awakened by the alarm, and influenced by a passion which contemned³⁷ difficulty, the proceeding day waited upon Doctor Joseph to obtain permission to marry his charge. He was heard with civility without cordiality, and an attention which promised little success. The Doctor proposed to hold a conference with Isabella himself, and dismissed Ira with a complaisance which conveyed no idea, and a bow of formality as far removed from indignity as from sincerity.

The promised interview took place. The Doctor appeared, his gait stately, circumspect, and majestick from long habit; his eye was that of tenderness, his voice condescension; and his hand was extended to the trembling Isabella, with an exact imitation of the dignified beneficence of an Ahasuerus, holding forth the life-giving sceptre to the prostrate and beautiful Esther.³⁸

³⁷ *Contemned*: treated with contempt

³⁸ *Ahasuerus*: the Persian ruler, in the Old Testament book of Esther, who extends his scepter to Esther to indicate that he will not punish her (Esther 5:1-2).

“I have the satisfaction, my child, of hearing you spoken of in the language of panegyrick.³⁹ The world, though not always partial to merit, and sometimes malicious to beauty, is unanimous in your praise. Highly participating in whatever *is*, or may in any manner *be*, relative to you, I acknowledge myself flattered by its approbation of your conduct.” “It is my wish to deserve that applause, and it shall be my aim to render your participation of what the world may say of me always agreeable.” “That manner in which you receive my exordium⁴⁰ imperceptibly steals upon my affection, and I exceedingly regret that, busied as I have been in the avocations of active and literary life, I have hitherto been without personal attestation of such modesty and loveliness.”

These compliments were tedious to Isabella; not that she disdained flattery, for she was a woman; but that her patience was exhausted in waiting to hear the name of Ira pronounced; a name, far sweeter to her ears and her heart than the complimentary effusions of Doctor Joseph. An opportunity presented itself, and she dilated upon the subject with an enthusiasm that aroused the attention of the guardian. He endeavoured to check the ardour of her manner. “My child, I am struck with wonder at your style and expression. Modest and discreet as you are, you launch into the praises of a young man, of whom your character appears rather too fine-spun.⁴¹ I acknowledge my alarm at your want of *grave speech* on this topick—a topick every way disagreeable to me. For without multiplying words for nought, let me seriously caution you against harbouring tender thoughts of Ira, and to think not of him any more.”

Isabella's sensibility was disconcerted. She was abashed; but recovering herself after a short pause, she continued the conversation and the praises of her lover. “Is not virtue amiable? In Ira is visible her fostering tuition. He follows her cheerfully,

because she is the object of his choice. Her fruit ripens with his age. The traits of his character are of her finishing. To vice unforgiving; to folly sarcastick; of good men emulous, and by evil example incorruptible, he may enjoy a conscious satisfaction in his own rectitude, and live in the applause, the esteem, the love, and respect of the world.”

The Doctor felt his surprise at the talents of Isabella increase every moment. He reprobated his indolence, inattention, and pride, which had heretofore held him a stranger to her, for whom he now conceived an affectionate, a paternal regard. “I cannot too much admire your fluency and ease; I wish the subject of your harmonious discourse was, in my mind, equal to the elegance of your rhetoric. I perceive you have perused books, but are not so well versed in the volume of the world. To this world, so necessary, so important that a young woman of your understanding should know, you are now, my child, speedily to be introduced; and in a character, too, much more elevated and respectable than that, which you have hitherto unfortunately sustained.”

Isabella was at a loss to comprehend, how she could possibly have been unfortunate, and not know it. The Doctor was full of pity for the errors of simplicity. Pride always regrets the omission of pleasures it might have enjoyed; laments the imperfection of its species, in not possessing fore-knowledge; wishes, in reviewing past actions, that it could have known how things would have turned out; and continually subverts its present enjoyments by an infamous retinue of *ex post facto* observations.

Isabella felt a struggle between delicacy and sensibility; respect for the gravity of her supposed guardian, and obedience to the purity of her own passion. This circumstance did not escape the penetration of Joseph, but actually hastened him to the communication of a secret, the development of which was the sole purport of this interview.

³⁹ *Panegyrick*: praise

⁴⁰ *Exordium*: introductory words

⁴¹ *Fine-spun*: flimsy, unconvincing

Earnest, solicitous, artless, and innocent, she requested to be made acquainted with the reasons which forbade her desired union with Ira. “His situation—” “Futile. The inquiry ought never to be, *Is a young man rich?* for without industry to augment, and economy to preserve, the most wealthy may, after a youth of dissipation, wear out the winter of life in the cave of poverty. But let the question be, *Is a youth prudent and frugal?* From small beginnings, these virtues will raise their possessor to honour and independence. There is a boldness which sees only advantages, and a prudence which perceives only difficulties: let a young man avoid both, by early observing them. Let him be persuaded of this maxim, that economy and industry are the hinges upon which turn the door to the temple of Fortune.”

“Extremely well conquered,” said Joseph, “but the other objections are invincible. His family—”

Isabella sighed, and said nothing. She attempted to speak, but the happy fluency for which she was remarkable was now withheld. “His family—what of it! Is it not equal to mine? Who is he? Who am I?”

These short but comprehensive questions, flowing from the springs of natural and spontaneous eloquence, darted, with the rapid force of lightning, to the conscious soul of Joseph. He ran eagerly towards her, and embraced her with infinite tenderness: “Queen of pathos! throw away your puerile,⁴² low-born ideas, I intreat, I conjure you, and look on me as a guardian, a protector, a friend and a father.” “A father!” apostrophized the astonished Isabella, with eyes streaming in tears.

“Acknowledging you for my child, and expecting from you the duty of a daughter, indulge me with the freedom of withholding my compliance. For you, my self-educated, accomplished, nature-prompted Isabel, I have more enlarged, more extensive, more liberal views. Your happiness is mine.

⁴² *Puerile*: childish, unsophisticated

Depend, therefore, upon my paternal love, and, at present, make no further inquiries.” She was solicitous to ask several questions; but Joseph superseded the whole, by seriously acquainting her that a perfect satisfaction could only be obtained hereafter.

He kissed his newly acquired daughter, and took his leave, bidding her, with a dignified air, order her matters to appear shortly in a style of magnificence, worthy her intrinsic merit. But these prospects of greatness, contemptible to the eyes of love, could not be contemplated by the distressed, the sorrowing Isabella; the image of Ira rushed between, and eclipsed every object of grandeur.

Several days passed, in which the young lady could hear nothing from her new discovered parent. “Procrastination is the thief of time.”⁴³ Doctor Joseph was prevented from accomplishing his benevolent designs, by a sudden death, and no posthumous notices remained, by which Isabella could trace or vindicate her connexion with him.

The lovers were reduced to the most painful suspense. They endeavoured to discover the cause of the Doctor's prohibition, but were lost and bewildered in the search. Slight circumstances leave little effect where passion is predominant. Love is bold, and perceives only advantages; it sees only self. Isabella, though alive to the emotions of nature, had no sooner found, but she had lost a father. During his life she had experienced no token of paternal regard from him, and was, though perhaps without design, forgotten by him in his death. Her lover was a friend, to whose tenderness she felt her heart under obligations, and to whose love she had rendered the tribute of gratitude and passion. At the idea of a parent, new hopes and affections had arisen in her bosom; but they now added strength to the dependence and esteem, placed by her partiality upon Ira.

⁴³ *Procrastination*...: from Edward Young's extremely popular poem *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality*, commonly known as *Night Thoughts* (Night One, line 393)

The youth's heaven of happiness had been overcast by a cloud of difficulty: the shade disappeared, and the sun of hope shone out with brighter lustre and greater strength. He wished to combine all the affections and charities of life in one. The death of Joseph removed the obstruction to his calling himself the husband of Isabella. Without the control of haughty superiority, the lovers imagined themselves at liberty to pursue their inclinations. Isabella consulted Mrs. Savage, who behaved in a strain of accustomed tenderness. The nuptial day was appointed. Mr. Savage, also, was pleased with the proposed connexion, and promised to remember her in a liberal manner at her entrance on the stage of life. This gentleman had been the particular inmate of Doctor Joseph, and freely owned himself at a loss to comprehend the reason why his friend had objected to their union. "But," continued he, "this eccentric physician had a proud spirit, which was aspiring without bounds, and wore those supercilious⁴⁴ airs, and imperious carriage which conscious dignity never fails to assume. Perhaps, Isabel, he designed for you a match more agreeable to his high ideas. But the virtues of Ira, which I have long observed with the most satisfactory eye, will render you happy, though in a less elevated sphere of life. Greatness, birth, wealth will not pluck one thorn from the pillow of discontent. The bed of innocence is not smoothed by the hand of luxury. Blest therefore with the object of choice, joy will smile in your eye, health riot in your veins, and virtue dignify your life."

Such were the sentiments of the man, whose house was the sanctuary of Isabella; the regularity of whose age atoned for the levities of youth: a compensation which the world readily allows, because rarely demanded. Mr. Savage wished pleasure might preside at their wedding and the next morning commenced a journey which he supposed would take several weeks to accomplish.

⁴⁴ *Supercilious*: disdainful, assuming superiority

The wedding day arrives. The friends of the young couple behold with raptures the little paraphernalia,⁴⁵ and the heart of honest Ira dances in the bosom of expectation. The simple Isabella anticipates the blush of the bride. Happy in themselves, in their prospects, and in their friends, they are married.

With little ceremony in her manner, and much business in her countenance, suddenly enters the Nurse. "Good news flies fast," said Ira; "you heard we were married, and have come to visit us on our wedding day." My dear children, cried the grave Matron, what is this I hear? In contradiction to the Doctor's will, are you thus suddenly—"What of him?" interrupted Ira with a combination of indignation and impatience; "unwarped by his haughtiness, unconvinced by his reasoning, unawed by his authority, shall we bow to his interdiction? If we regulate our lives by the will of the world, we shall be governed by the caprice of one, the false delicacy of another, and the injustice of a third. But we are more independent. We think with our own minds, infer with our own judgments, and determine according to our own ideas of happiness. Behold then the happiest union in the world."

"Heaven forbid the union," exclaimed the matron with more zeal than prudence. "The Doctor forbade it, and he had weightier reasons for his conduct than those he condescended to give you. Hear me, my children, for so I call, so I think you: did not these arms support your infancy? did not my breast supply your helpless state with life-sustaining food? Interest does not prompt my solicitude; ambition does not cause any anxiety at this time. Why then will you not believe me sincere? Your welfare is my object, your happiness my concern.

All took fire at this alarm, and were thrown into silent attention. The trembling bride, mute and pale, was tortured with

⁴⁵ *Paraphernalia*: the items associated with the wedding

doubt and fear. “Heaven forbid the union!” reiterated Ira, with astonishment and apprehension.

The nurse prepared herself to discover the secret. “Are you not already connected by the tie of Nature? Is not the cause of Doctor Joseph's aversion to your marriage easy to be understood? Convinced you were both his own children, he withheld his consent to a junction at which Nature herself is offended. From him I received you both in your infancy; at his desire nourished you, and brought you up. How could the Doctor grant his leave to such a marriage?”

A pathetick scene followed this declaration. Lorenzo, with all the art and assiduity of friendship, consoled the frantick Ira. The powers of consolation were exerted by the benevolent Mrs. Savage in behalf of the distrest bride; whose soul, was in truth capable of receiving the balm of compassion; whose soul, like a rock which resists the impetuosity of a torrent, might indeed be overwhelmed but not rent asunder.

Three days intervened, and the lovers had no interview. In the hour of misfortune, when oppressed with a multiplicity of thoughts to disburthen the mind either by writing or conversation, gives relief to pain, and tranquillity to the unquiet. Borne down with sorrowing reflections, Ira took the determination of communicating his thoughts to Isabella.

The unfortunate bride was sitting heavy, melancholy, musing. 'Twas at the decline of day. The parting sun shot a horizontal beam through the crimson curtains. Ira entered and beheld in the person of his beloved the figure of “Patience on a monument,” as described by Shakespeare, “smiling at Grief.”⁴⁶ He took her hand. She looked up; arose, “My husband, my brother.” The young man, agitated by a thousand sensations, grew gradually composed. “Isabella, I must see you no more.

⁴⁶ *Patience*. . . : Viola's veiled self-description from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Act 2, scene 4, lines 112-13.

How are my senses bewildered in this meeting. I find, even now, that to meet your eye is at once my pleasure and my perdition. Why do I suppress my feelings; why check the tears which involuntarily, burst from my eyes.” “Peace, Ira, peace. Give liberty to your sensations to act themselves. Why dam up the streams of thy tears? Are they not the characteristicks of Nature to designate an honest heart?”⁴⁷ “To remain in your presence, my sister, my wife, is willingly to swim into the vortex of destruction. I have imposed upon myself a resolve, therefore, to see you no more, convinced that absence from you will conduce to my welfare.”

Isabella manifested evident symptoms of dislike at this resolution. “Will you fly, and suffer me to sink into the gulf of despair? For never more shall I appear in the world if uncomforted, uncountenanced, unsupported by you. No matter by what title I call you, still are you my stay and my staff.

The young husband imagined he proceeded systematically. “Let us be ruled by reason. In all distress mankind imbibe consolation from two sources: In *dissipation* is sought a temporary forgetfulness, but experience evinces there is no Lethe for love.⁴⁸ In time or *absence* we trust for relief, but how vain the hope of future repose. I will strike a blow at the root. I will depart with all imaginable expedition. I will seek redress in the bosom of the mercantile world. Busied with novelty and engaged in regular pursuits, I will teach my mind to contemplate other objects, and to forget the image of Isabella, which has so long possess my heart, and obtruded itself into every action of my life. Perhaps my future conduct may be tinged with the melancholy of this adventure. I will yet remember you with respect, what is more

⁴⁷ Voltaire. [Note in original. The reference here is to the 1736 drama *Alzire*, which included the lines: “Hide not thy Tears: weep boldly—and be proud / To give the *flowing* *Virtue* manly *Way*. / ‘Tis Nature's *Mark*, to know an *honest* Heart by” (Act II).

⁴⁸ *Lethe*: the mythical river of Hades, which provided forgetfulness of the past.

with tenderness. A new era is commenced in the history of my life. I am no more what I was. Hitherto I have conceived of human nature a character which it is a duty to wear, now I read them as they are, and feel myself a better man, a better citizen, though less philanthropick. Regarding myself, I shall be rich, and be capacitated to fulfil those offices of tenderness and charity which I have heretofore only known in theory. For one favourable circumstance, I pay my gratitude to the bounty of heaven. The discovery and termination of an unfortunate passion has not sunk me to that stupid apathy which absorbs the senses, but has inspired me with that resolution which is the soul of action. Doomed to look on you only in the light, and to call you only by the appellation of sister; reminded by every object of the calamitous event of our loves—I go. Lorenzo, in the ardour of friendship, provides my passage, and I am forthwith to embark.”

Isabella viewed the project of her friend with pity, and a smile which indicated her contempt of its practicability. “Your forced, pretended resolution, my dear Ira, is of little consequence. I know your character, Ira, better than you know it yourself. Honest, sincere, impetuous, yet meek and candid, I can conceive how far you may be driven by the strength of passion, how far deluded by the well-intended, but wrong-headed advice of friendship. Do you love, and yet think to forget one by mixing with the world of business? Impossible. Personal presence is not necessary to inspire or continue love. We love those whom we have never seen, or from whom we are removed by absence. The characters of the great and the good picture to us ideas of beauty, and beauty is the cause of love. How are we struck with the awful virtue of a Brutus or a Cato; how delighted with the more gentle, more amiable graces of a Scipio; how do we exult in the honest heart and unambitious mind of a Cincinnatus, a La Fayette, and a

Washington.⁴⁹ To come up to our times still nearer, how are our breasts warmed with sympathetick benevolence at the name of Howard⁵⁰: Do we not figure to ourselves, in the solemnity of sacred anticipation, the Son of Heaven seated at the right of the throne of Grace, extending the hand of welcome to the disciple of charity, and pronouncing with the voice of applause, “I was in prison and you came unto me.”⁵¹ We love those whom we have not seen, because we entertain in our hearts an *idea of beauty* caused by their virtues. Surely, therefore, if you are possessed of such an idea, it will follow you to the uttermost parts of the earth. Haunted continually with the ideal presence of the beloved object, you will change your climate, but not your mind. Remembering me, is the retrospect painful, matters it in what place you take this retrospect?⁵² Better be here, though surrounded with disappointment and solemn thought, than among strangers. Let the mind be employed, but do not go.”

Ira perceived in the argument of Isabella that sublime which not only *persuades, but transports*.⁵³ He owned himself

⁴⁹ *Brutus*...: Brutus (85 BCE-42 BCE) and *Cato* (the Younger, 95 BCE-46 BCE) were Roman models of virtue frequently referenced in 18C Anglo-American political thought. The Marquis de *Lafayette* (1757-1834) was a French aristocrat who fought with the American revolutionaries, and was also viewed as a model of selflessness. Washington (1732-1799), who was serving as president when William Hill Brown died in 1793, was frequently compared to the Roman statesman and general Cincinnatus (~519 BCE- ~430 BCE), who reportedly left his farm to serve the state as a military leader, then returning to his simple agricultural life.

⁵⁰ *Howard*: John Howard (1726-1790), a famous 18C prison reformer and philanthropist.

⁵¹ *I was in prison*...: quoting from Matthew 25:36 in the Christian New Testament

⁵² *Retrospect*: contemplation of the past

⁵³ Longinus. [Note in the original. The reference here is to the well-known tract “On the Sublime” written in Greek sometime in the 1C CE. The William Smith translation, popular in the English-speaking world, gives this phrasing:

convinced of the folly of absence, where there is a real passion, and suffered the ship to depart on her voyage without him.

Ira was always attracted by *the busy hum of men*.⁵⁴ He had now the most forcible incitements to visit the haunts of social intercourse. To mingle in the herd of the undiscerning, the foppish, the vain, and the coxcombical,⁵⁵ may deceive the pangs of repining. Always vacant, trifling, empty, but ceremonious, the manners of Ira had a fairer opportunity of being polished than his morals of being perfected. How can a young man perform all the rites of fashion, and the duties of etiquette, and remember his virtue and himself? 'Tis absolutely serving two masters, and it often happens that we neglect ourselves to flatter the world, and sacrifice our conveniences and our wishes to the caprice of folly, and the delusions of vice. The snares of wantonness were spread for the virtuous brother of Isabella. Let us see how he behaved in temptation.

No one exhibited more attention and politeness to Ira than the volatile Florio. “My friend! I am told you had like to have been married—what a lucky escape.” “Ah! my friend, you deceive yourself — a cruel —” “That is the general cant of stupid lovers. They sigh and whine for the promised land of matrimony, a country of which strangers wish to be inhabitants, and where the natives long to be exiled.⁵⁶ Thank your beneficent stars for this deliverance. Reckon it as the greatest happiness that chance could have brought about for you. But I see plainly you

“For the *Sublime* not only persuades, but even throws an audience into transport.”]

⁵⁴ Milton. [Note in the original. The citation here is from the English poet’s 1645 poem “L’Allegro” (“The Happy Man”), line 118.]

⁵⁵ *Coxcombical*: foolishly conceited

⁵⁶ Voltaire. [Note in the original. The reference seems to be to a line from the French author Charles Rivière Dufresny (1648-1724), who in *Les Amusements Sérieux et Comiques* writes “Le pays du mariage a cela de particulier, que les étrangers ont envie de l’habiter: et les habitants naturels voudroient en être exilés.” The quip was frequently attributed to Voltaire and Montaigne.]

have not the art of concealing your mortifications. I will bet ten to one, and make them hundreds, that you deem this lucky adventure, a reverse of fortune. For I can read physiognomies, but that is a Chesterfieldian mystery.⁵⁷ Yes! down, absolutely down.”

Ira thought, very justly, that this harangue was the most insipid of any thing he had ever heard. “Great penetration is not necessary to find out when a man is gay and when serious.” “Is it possible for love to make one serious? To me it is the funniest thing in nature, and in all my negotiations I am the happiest fellow in the world. I defy any one to boast of being so well with ladies of all descriptions as I am. Would you know the secret? Flattery. Is the first dose disagreeable, depend upon it 'tis not strong enough. Redouble the potion. Impudence and perseverance conquer difficulty. Throw yourself upon the bended knee of encomiastick⁵⁸ rapture, and pour out the incense of adulation without reserve. Never mind the truth, for hang it, Ira, when one is really in love, what signifies a few agreeable, wonder-working lies.” “How do you make up accounts with your conscience?”—“I never read any thing of conscience in Stanhope. Ninon⁵⁹ says not a syllable of conscience. I never heard the name of conscience prophaned in the polite world, consequently I know nothing of it. I believe conscience is discarded from the train of love. But for aught I know, it may be one of the ex-ministers of the Cytherean⁶⁰ court.” “Honour”—“Why as to honour it is the soul of a gallant man. It is honourable

⁵⁷ *Physiognomies*: features of the face, in the late 18C believed to be readable with the proper study. On Chesterfield, see note 27; *Stanhope*, in the next paragraph, refers to Chesterfield as well.

⁵⁸ *Encomiastick*: laudatory

⁵⁹ *Ninon*: Ninon de l’Enclos, a famous French courtesan and author, some of whose writings were defensively gathered in English-language collections like *Memoirs of Ninon de l’Enclos with her Letters to Monsr de St. Evremond and to the Marquis de Sévigné* (London ed. 1761; Philadelphia, 1806).

⁶⁰ *Cytherean*: pertaining to Venus, who was also known as Cytherea

to win an elegant woman, consequently all the means employed in the operation must be so too. To pay gambling debts on demand, and bid Honesty call again is a sign of a man of honour.” “Suppose any one should dispute all this?” “Do you assert and let him prove to the contrary.” “That done, what next?” “Challenge him for his insolence in pretending to dispute with a gentleman.” “Where have I been all my life that I am unacquainted with the tenets of honourable politeness? Believe me, Florio, I have all my days been adoring truth, sincerity, and honesty, and thought if these were planted in the juvenile mind, happiness would be the fruit. But now when I look upon the world, and find my adversities more and heavier than those of men less true, less sincere, and less honest, I am tempted to cry out, as Brutus exclaimed on the bed of death, O Virtue, I have worshipped thee as a real good, and I find thee an empty shade.”⁶¹

Florio knew not how to reply: he had turned over more pages of novels than of Roman history—“Devil take Brutus, nobody cares what he says. Talk about death and you give me the vapours.”⁶² Let us live, my dear boy, all the days of our lives. I see now you are far gone yourself; I will prescribe you a cure. Hang it, what signifies being a miser in pleasure. I am high in favour with several sweet Thaisés⁶³, and I will do myself the honour to announce you to a dear little enchantress who shall console you for your loss in the wife that was to be. Let us seek in love the cordial of all care; and lose in the soft intoxication the remembrance of former severity.”

⁶¹ *Brutus exclaimed...*: This attribution was frequently repeated in 18C writing.

⁶² *Vapours*: exhalations associated with depression or some nervous disorder; the *sentimentals* analogously described a state of illness related to strong emotions.

⁶³ *Thaisés*: plural of Thais, a legendary courtesan of ancient Greece, and the name for the mistress figure in Brown’s short story “Harriot; Or, The Domestick Reconciliation” (1789).

Ira felt an emotion of tenderness at the last words of Florio. “Severity! indeed — but what is the proposed remedy? Is it not truly contemptible? What is love without sentiment?” “I see you are afflicted with the sentimentals, which are absolutely as prejudicial to life as the vapours. Discard these idle notions, for what is *human being* but a game of crib?⁶⁴ Mind what I say then: *discard* thought; for thinking is the most tedious thing to me in the world. Let pleasure be your *trump* card, and let your *hand* boast a *flush* of dissipation. This is the way I spend my time. Now I will tell you the divine company I keep, and demonstrate to you that I *live*, while you, with your morals and such trash only *vegetate*. In the first place there is Rosella, a perfect divinity, with the most beautiful complexion in the whole female world. ’Tis true she has rather injured it of late by the application of too much paint. Flirtilla, a pretty, vivacious thing that you may love with convenience. Cynthia, very handsome, but fickle and pettish, very apt to change her mind and her lover; a true coquette, and to fall in love with her may be dangerous; for women are such creatures, that if they see you *au despoir*⁶⁵ they are like speculators in the stocks, they never sell out without a high advance. Diana is a capital figure, not so handsome as some; more majestick than beautiful. However, not of quite so good a character, being turned out of the house of a kind of old batchelor, her friend; because my gentleman had missed half a dozen guineas. Now Diana had never suspected that the old fool had counted them.⁶⁶ Besides these there are Fidelia Froth, Prudence Slammerkin, Desire Goodale, Love Midnight, Patience Couzens, Tabitha Sly, Silence Tickle—” “Enough, enough, my dear Florio. What mean you by giving this long catalogue of respectable ladies?” “To

⁶⁴ *Game of crib*: cribbage, a card game popular since the 17C; the italicized terms in the next two sentences pertain to card games.

⁶⁵ *Au despoir*: in despair (French)

⁶⁶ Gay. [Note in the original. The allusion is to English playwright John Gay (1685-1732) and his well-known play *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728).]

these I expect the pleasure shortly to present you. In this gay and vivacious society, you shall lose your melancholy. Time shall never trouble you. Your soul shall be so fixed to the delusive enchantment, that the white-winged hours shall fly on unperceived.⁶⁷ Your sentimentals, so dull, so sorrowful, so sickening, shall vanish like a disagreeable dream. You have been sleeping on the bed of care, but you are now to be gently waked by the voice of enchanting Love.

Ira had heard more than he really comprehended. “My dear Florio, I perceive you draw the most flattering pictures. You have indeed an exquisite imagination, but your *postulata* follow one another in such rapid succession, that I am at a loss to draw a classical *inference*.”⁶⁸

Florio had in him nothing of the scholar: but he thought it a greater absurdity to hold his tongue, than to answer nonsensically. “At it again, Ira? Your *apostles* and your *classicks* will ruin you for this world. What a happiness to be delivered from the sentimentals! Had this been my misfortune, I should possibly have been as weak and ignorant as you are. Excuse me, Sir, but I speak my mind. I might then have lived by anticipation as you do, and neglected to catch the pleasures as they pass. My notion of existence is this: Let us live all the days of our life.”—Ira heard this self-sufficiency of his new acquaintance with some contempt and conscious superiority; and if he had any resentment, it was smothered by the novelty of the sentiments and fascinating prospects held up to view by the fanciful manner of Florio. Though his friend began to grow tautologous, he scorned to interrupt him. The gentleman of modern manners thus proceeded, giving mischievous utterance to his immoral

⁶⁷ Rowe. [Note in the original. We have not been able to determine the reference here, which could be to the English playwright Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) or the English poet Elizabeth Rowe (1674-1737), both found in Boston circulating libraries.]

⁶⁸ *Postulata*: Latin for postulates, so here mocking Florio’s lack of logic

imagination. “How I hate your dull sons of stupidity and hypocrisy, who, by dissembling their intentions by crafty gravity, think to deceive us and pass for good men. I never conceal my designs be they what they may. I hide not my meaning in hypocritical dissimulation, and love to behold men mix in their amusements without disguise. My cheeks are never coloured by the blush of shame. To throw off ridiculous constraint, the manners of a clown, the absurd *mauvaise honte* should be the first consideration of a gentleman.”⁶⁹ Who shall fear the sarcasm of ill-bred censure; who apprehend disagreeable consequences from the infamous tongue of sanctified slander? Surely these presentiments can never pervade the heart of a man of honour, who is just upon the point of engaging in the cause of gallantry, and acquiring a competent *knowledge of the world*.

“Why then, my dear Ira, do you hesitate to be introduced to those real pleasures, which shall hush every sigh in the bosom of regret; which shall supplant those tender, those delicate and sorrowful ideas which prey upon your vitals; which shall fill up the vacuum of unfortunate love; which shall drive from the reflective mind all remembrance of past expectation; which shall render you a balance of ease and rest, to compensate the distresses of blasted hopes, and which shall give you, in the undisturbed possession of unresisting beauty, a *factitious*⁷⁰ substitute, for the *beloved* Isabella.”

The virtuous Ira stood congealed with amazement, confusion and horror. “According to your system, (if vice can be systematical) I may visit the temple of obscenity, and associate myself with a daughter of prostitution, a child of infamy, the contempt and disgrace of her species. *Is there no virtue extant?*”⁷¹ — Florio stood abashed and confounded. The solemnity, the

⁶⁹ *Clown*: a rustic person; *mauvaise honte*: false modesty

⁷⁰ *Factitious*: artificial

⁷¹ Shakespeare. [Note in the original. The reference here is to *Henry IV, Part 1*, Act 2, scene 4, lines 121-22.]

enthusiasm of Ira's manner of speaking disconcerted the native impudence of this disciple of Fashion. The honest sentimentalist continued without interruption.

“Can I look upon a woman without virtue, and see in her, or persuade myself by deceptious and fallacious reasoning that I see, the copy of my lost Isabella? What a description of vile characters have you given me, and with what tame, unmanly patience have I borne it! Believe me, Sir, whenever I am informed of a woman, who, possessed of uncommon graces and exterior attractions, exposes herself for sale, the victim of avarice, or the martyr of voluptuousness, my soul sinks within me, oppressed with a combination of compassion and terrour, of disgust and pity, of indignation and contempt.

“The virtues of a beautiful woman are an ornament and an honour to her sex; but her *indiscretion* is the shame and the degradation of human nature. We may follow up the streams of dishonour to this fountain of vice. Shameless, profane, unprincipled, and disobedient children: Penurious, faithless, obscene, and dishonest husbands: Unprofitable, idle, disaffected, and seditious subjects. The bane of domestick happiness, the pest of society, a woman of bad morals is the destruction of the credulous and the simple; the terror of the man and the politician. Tell me therefore, my friend, shall the duty I owe to my virtue, and to the social compact, be oblivioned by delusive temptation; and by a fancy wavering, incautious, and, when indulged, dangerous and ungovernable?”

Florio hung down his head, and did not answer. Vice is always ashamed when opposed with vigour. Ira felt the triumph of virtue: the glow of satisfaction suffused his face, and a dignified resentment lightened in his eye. With an assiduity productive of the happiest consequences, he determined to preserve and keep alive that sacred flame of virtue, which, if unextinguished by despair, and unquenched by temptation, will

illuminate the path of frailty, and light the way to victory and happiness.

Ira soliloquised as he walked away: “Let me learn resolution and stability of character. To acquire these, to strengthen myself in these habits, so necessary in my present perturbed situation, I must cease to associate with the dissipated. I will visit the friends of decency, of truth, and of sobriety. These alone can open the sluices of tranquillity. These alone are virtuous. These alone are happy. To whom shall I apply but to her? I will go to Isabella.”

He immediately went, and communicated, without reserve, his battle with Florio, and his conquest. “Tell me,” continued he, agitated with his own narrative, “whether stability be not the only method of my redemption. It is you alone who can recommend, enforce, and describe it.”

Isabella was affected at the wildness of his manner, and the strength of his passionate exclamation. “It is an acquirement of the first magnitude. Stability of character, for its importance, may be ranked among the virtues. A firm, determined, unconquerable mind is a friend which will not abandon us in distress, but is ever ready to shut the door against horror and despair.” “I will be stable,” said Ira, with firmness. “But be not a cynick. Avoid the danger of being over tenacious in your opinions. Obstinacy is never amiable; if linked with error, ridiculous. Do not imagine, that, to sustain the character of dignified stability, pride is necessary.” “I beg your pardon, but I must interrupt you.—I will defend pride, for I myself am proud. *Reverence thyself* is a maxim said to be descended from heaven.⁷² I am happy to see it universally flourish; for where is it not visible? It unfurls the banners of commerce; tempts the dangers of the ocean, and the sands of the desert; it sustains society, and peoples the world; it pervades the bosom of innocence, and the closet of

⁷² *Reverence thyself*: proverbial, attributed to Pythagoras.

the recluse; it ascends the pulpit with the teacher of divinity, and the main-top-gallant mast with the ship-boy.”—“I grant you,” said Isabella smiling, “there is an honest pride, which exults in a consciousness of its own dignity and worth, and which can be extinguished only by the extinction of life.” “It is this which can despise calamity, and is therefore necessary for us.” “But I meant to caution you against that obstinate pride which refused consolation, and a false delicacy which sinks the soul to apathy.

“This is the character of an irresolute man. Undetermined and wavering, he no sooner commences the work of his own happiness, than he drops it unfinished. He contemplates the difficulties, and seldom the advantages of exertion. Fatigued in idea, frightened by the imaginary toil of honest stability, he looks on labour with loathing, and leaves it with disgust. Averse to industry, his finances decrease, his credit sinks. Scorning to help himself, he finds no assistance from others. The hand of friendship is never extended to the son of indigence; and however we may lament this *parsimony* of benevolence, he who is blind to his own interest calls unregarded on his neighbour. Despised by those whom he once contemned, the pity and the abhorrence of the world, he is reduced to penury, rags, and wretchedness.

“His misery terminates not here. Hitherto, he has been only the enemy of himself; now, neglected and insulted by the whole human race, he turns the foe of mankind. Poverty is the mother of vice. Well has a wise man made it his prayer to be removed from poverty,⁷³ and pertinent and pathetic are his reasons: *Lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.* Thus then the indolent, wavering, insolent man, reduced by his profligacy and inert disposition to ignominy and contempt, raises

⁷³ Agur. [Note in the original. Agur is identified as the author of selected proverbs in the Old Testament book of *Proverbs*, 30:1. The allusion here is to Proverbs 30:7-9.]

his sacrilegious hand against the property of his neighbour, and his more profane tongue against the sovereignty of Heaven.”

Every word of this descriptive character penetrated the heart of Ira. “Shall I suffer myself to be borne down by misfortune, and shall your picture, Isabel, be the prophecy of my life? No, I will be stable.” “And happy,” added she. “But can this be accomplished, my fair teacher, merely by the exercise of those morals which resist temptation? Is there not something *greater* necessary to render the work complete? Isabella smiled, “you mean religion?” “I do.” “Religion is an ornament and a bulwark. Is it not the soul of stability? take it then, and find in your own mind the firm, unshaken character you wish to assume.

“Be a man of stability. Be not brow-beaten by difficulty, nor intimidated by danger. Be not the dupe of passion, nor the bubble of temptation. Add cheerfulness to labour; vigour to industry, tenderness to charity, and dignity to benevolence. In your commerce with the world be prudent without meanness, and bold without temerity. To *yourself* be severe without indignity, and correcting without irreverence. To *mankind*, be candid without weakness, and resolute without insolence. To your *God* be pious without hypocrisy, and faithful without—shame.”

The unfortunate youth, gazed upon his beautiful monitor with eyes swimming in tears, and with a soul, lost in wonder and ecstasy. She continued her address with a steady voice, for Ira was beyond the power of interruption.

“What a miserable contrast is here exhibited: The *indolent in misfortune*, like a wave, without rest; the sport of winds; driven by every blast, and giving way to opposition. The *resolute* permanent as a rock, unawed at the howling of the tempest, and unmoved at the dashing of mighty waters.

“Ira, my friend! my brother! be stable, be religious. By attention, be cautious; by habit, vigilant; by principle, honest. Then will your eye *pervade* those recesses, where the indolent *perceive* clouds and darkness. You will see with satisfaction the

prosperous work of your hands and rejoice in the greatness of your strength.⁷⁴ Be encouraged to persevere. Be persuaded that stability is the offspring of a serious mind, and borrow illumination from the *Father of Lights*, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.”⁷⁵

As Isabella pronounced these words, her posture was firm, and her eye fixed upon her brother; her right hand placed upon her breast, and her left pointing towards heaven.

At this moment the nurse, who had been regulated in all her conduct by the most honest intentions, entered the apartment. She saw the distress of the parties, condoled with them on their present condition, and recommended with infinite sincerity patience in affliction, and resignation to necessity.

The company was further enlarged by the appearance of Mrs. Savage, whose ideas of the unfortunate adventure ran in a train similar to those of the matron. She acquainted them of the return of her husband, and of his extraordinary emotion at the history she had given him.

In the midst of her speech, Mr. Savage himself entered. A cadaverous hue overspread his countenance, grief beamed from his eye, and on his lip quivered the accents of anguish. “At my departure I wished pleasure might preside at your nuptials. I regret exceedingly the journey I have taken, because it has occasioned such infinite disappointment to a pair of feeling hearts, and because in the developing of this plot and reconciling your junction, I myself shall not sustain the most amiable character. Be quiet, my children; rest satisfied that you are connected at this moment by no other bond than that which the parson has tied. Your foster-mother, notwithstanding the uneasiness effected by her obtrusion on your wedding day, is right and honest in her representation. Other men would make a

circumlocution in declaring this matter, and in stating the particulars so as to convince all present and the world of the real circumstances of this unfortunate affair; the obscurity of which has caused such an egregious error in the nurse and given unspeakable pain to his newly-married couple.

“Suffer me, Mrs. Savage, to come to the matter at once; to open the day upon the darkness which clouds the happiness of all here, by giving you the *paternity of Ira*. It is the discovery of this alone which can be of ease to my mind, clear the character of the nurse, bring contentment to the bosom of this young man, joy and health to the soul of his bride, and satisfaction to yourself.

“If, in declaring the catastrophe of this story, I should describe myself in a situation in which I may have forgotten my respect and honour to the best of wives, you, madam, will grant me forgiveness. Assure me of this before I proceed, and I promise not to hesitate in telling you who is the real father of this amiable young man.”

Mrs. Savage blushed at the compliment, and perceiving the consternation of all was raised, and their hopes eager to be satisfied, consented with dignity, observing she should be tempted never to upbraid him with a violation of the most sacred obligation, if, in the estrangement of juvenile passion, his illicit amour had been *unwarrantably* blest in a son like Ira.

“Which,” said Mr. Savage, advancing to the young man, “is really the case. You are my son; I claim from you the duties, the acknowledgments of your new relationship.”

Joy and surprise illumined the countenance of Ira. The hands of the father and son were imperceptibly locked in each other. The youth, snatched from despair, and overcome with sentiments of gratitude, prayed that no misconduct on his part might ever dishonour the title with which Mr. Savage had been pleased to grace him.

“I see,” said the father, “you are all solicitous to be acquainted with the secret history of Ira. Let us first congratulate

⁷⁴ Isaiah. [Note in the original. The allusion seems to be to Isaiah 63:1.]

⁷⁵ James. [Note in the original. The allusion is to James 1:17.]

one another on the happy issue which this gloomy incident has taken, and your curiosity shall afterwards be fully gratified.”

Mr. Savage began:

“There was a *fete champetre* at the seat of Torrismond,⁷⁶ at which all the villagers of both sexes were invited. The city poured forth the friends of this liberal gentleman to behold or participate in the rustick festival.

“Among the village girls who danced on the green, Lucinda was distinguished for beauty of person and grace of motion. Her stature was not remarkable for height. There was natural ease, and rural neatness was its ornament. Her face, though it had regular features, was a little freckled and sun-burnt. With a happy confidence, occasioned by a conscious harmlessness, she was not awkwardly shy. Nothing presuming, nothing bashful, she hit as happy a medium of agreeable carriage, as nature could teach, or education encourage and sanction. When familiarity had worn off the constraint which innocence feels at the approach of superiority, she was frank without presumption, and communicative without impertinence.—Spirit and animation beamed from her eye. The cadence of love fell from her tongue.

“Those, whom luxury nurses in the effeminacy of refinement, find relaxation in the charms of nature. We are indeed intoxicated by the deleterious⁷⁷ cup of luxury, and gradually become estranged from simplicity. Philosophy rectifies the error, and recalls the wandering mind to nature's unadorned beauty. It was thus I imagined myself a philosophical admirer of

Lucinda. But Lucinda had eyes more deleterious than luxury, and which disconcerted the gravity of philosophy.

“The dance ended. Lucinda took her seat, and I placed myself by her side. “You dance so genteelly, my dear, that if your agreeable manner were to wake up the jealousy of the whole of this female circle it would be no matter of astonishment to me.” “People in this part of the country are very apt to be jealous”—“But if you, Lucinda, lived in town you would be the general object of admiration instead of that of a malignant passion. Every thing you could desire would be laid at your feet. How happy should I be, if I had the good fortune to conduct you there.”—“I there—what for?” “To please all eyes, and enchant all hearts. To receive the homage due to your charms, to be adorned in the ornaments of elegant dress, and command my heart which now bows a slave to thee.”

“Lucinda thought all this very fine, but did not acquiesce with much readiness to the scheme of taking the journey. I continued the conversation: “You have doubtless a father who delights in your opening beauty.” “No, he died in the wars!” “Indeed! How happy are the lost in battle! They fall the honour of their country and the regret of their friends.”

“Patriotism, and the love of our country's benefactors, are excellent virtues; the most often praised, and the most seldom practised. I made an elege on the dead father of Lucinda, but ceased not to feed the daughter with the poison of flattery. “If you have no near friend to behold with pleasure your accomplishments, you will, beyond dispute, grow up in your own estimation—” “While I continue discreet.” This was an answer which checked, but did not confuse me. I took it for the language of simplicity. But remember, Ira, it is not yet time to blush for my villany, or your mother's weakness; keep your feelings to yourself till you are satisfied of the whole truth, which I will give in a very concise manner.

⁷⁶ *Fête champêtre*: a rural festival; *Torrismond*: it is possible this name comes from *Maxims, Characters, and Reflections*, a 1756 work by the English aristocrat Fulke Greville. One of the character profiles describes “Torismond” as a young man obsessed with horse-racing. There is also a Torrismond in John Dryden's 1681 drama “The Spanish Friar,” revealed at play's end to be the legitimate heir to the throne.

⁷⁷ *Deleterious*: harmful to one's health

“For why should I repeat to you the solicitations on my part, or the objections on hers: it is sufficient to remark that the former were successful and the latter surmounted.

“Great cities are always liberally furnished with those officious minions of vice, who for pecuniary compensation, sacrifice that which the world calls an honest character to the convenience of licentiousness. Nobody hears conscience, when the sound of money is made, and these wretches answer the inquiry of scrutiny, when their conduct is examined, by repeating the words of Falstaff, “Tis my vocation: tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation.”⁷⁸ The traps of craft are secretly laid by these hellborn contrivers, for the artless feet of those in whom meet beauty and poverty.

After we had flown from the seat of Torrismond, we were received in town to the apartments of elegance.

I wonder at those curious novels where artless simplicity is represented the dupe of libertinism. The seduction of innocence is the vilest subject in the world. None but a dull, melancholy, saturnine temper would presume to take up the dismal narration. Lucinda, lively, affable and simple as she was, had successfully laid a snare for me. She was not won from the way of prudence by my means, but had had the fortune to have been apparently beguiled three or four times. Our union was however blest with the presence of the Loves and Graces. Till at length this evanescent retinue was augmented by the company of Lucinda. My rural disciple, with the greatest pleasantry imaginable, told me it was her intention to make me the father of a child. It was in vain to remonstrate, for I, like all gentlemen in my honourable situation, had accustomed myself to comply with all the whims of my mistress.

⁷⁸ *Falstaff*: the quotation is from Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 1, scene 2, lines 210-11.

From an apprehension, notwithstanding, that this circumstance might awaken the jealousy of those, whom it was for my peace and interest to flatter, I applied to my friend and confederate Doctor Joseph. He was seldom at a loss in matters of gallantry, physick, and gravity. He undertook to ease my complaint, and stand father to the little destitute stranger himself. “This measure,” said the friendly physician, “will necessarily exclude suspicion from the bosom of Mrs. Savage, by damming up every avenue of communication through which the affair must pass. When we are ashamed of the consequences of any folly or misconduct the best way is to conceal them. I will therefore ease your shoulders of a burden which you deem a disgrace to carry.

The prolifick Lucinda was easily persuaded to accede to the project. As soon as the infant was born she gave him the name of Ira, which he has borne ever since. This nurse, who now stands before me, as she may very well recollect, had previously performed a peculiar service for the Doctor in the care of a daughter named Isabella. This nurse took Ira, and by the fiction which I have related was her credulity imposed upon.

One observation more I am compelled to make on gentlemen who edify the world by writing novels. They presume it for the interest of morality to represent misfortune and death as the consequences of indiscretion. The vivacity of Lucinda could by no means coalesce in the moral opinions of those novelists. She did not find it in her heart to die out of complaisance to these rulers of nature. But notwithstanding her slip found means to secure an honest, industrious husband. I would not willingly make one remark inimical⁷⁹ to good morals, but as I am not a professed dealer in literature, I may be allowed to speak the truth.

I suppose now, you must be all satisfied of the real situation of this intricate adventure. Let mirth and good nature kiss each other, and peace spread her wings over this house.

⁷⁹ *Inimical*: injurious

Mr. Savage concluded his narrative, and sincerity and joy were predominant. For in scenes where passion and sensibility are interested, how weak are the efforts of dissimulation! An interchange of embraces testified the transports of all the parties, but the manner in which Isabella received the cordiality of her husband was the most striking, being mingled with tenderness, feeling, sentiment and love. It was tempered with that passion yet modesty, as to remind Mr. Savage of the description of a Roman poet, where a lady meets the embraces of her husband in a state between that of *a maid* and *a wife*; but in which the blush of the *virgin* disappears and becomes lost in the chaste desires of the tender *spouse*.⁸⁰

THE END.

⁸⁰ *Roman poet*: the reference is unclear, but may allude to the 1C BCE poet Catullus's *Epithalamium on Vinia and Manlius*.