



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Matthew Lewis

Complete Works



Series Eleven

The Complete Works of
MATTHEW LEWIS

(1775-1818)



Contents

The Novels

The Effusions of Sensibility (1839)
Ambrosio; or, The Monk (1796)
The Bravo of Venice by Heinrich Zschokke (1805)

The Shorter Fiction

Romantic Tales (1808)
A Nancy Story (1839)

The Plays

The Castle Spectre (1798)
The East Indian (1800)
Alfonso, King of Castile (1801)

The Poetry Collections

Tales of Terror (1799)
Tales of Wonder (1801)
Poems (1812)
Uncollected Poems

The Poems

List of Poems in Chronological Order
List of Poems in Alphabetical Order

The Non-Fiction

Journal of a West India Proprietor (1833)

The Biography

Matthew Gregory Lewis by Leslie Stephen

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

M. J. Lewis

© *Delphi Classics* 2021
Version 1

The Complete Works of
MATTHEW LEWIS



with introductions by Gill Rossini

By Delphi Classics, 2021

COPYRIGHT

Complete Works of Matthew Lewis



First published in the United Kingdom in 2021 by Delphi Classics.

© Delphi Classics, 2021.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

ISBN: 978 1 80170 008 5

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

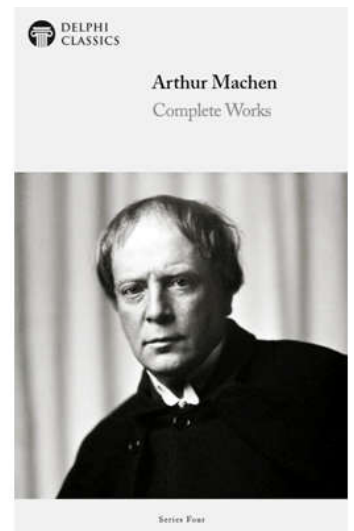
United Kingdom

Contact: sales@delphiclassics.com

DELPHI  CLASSICS

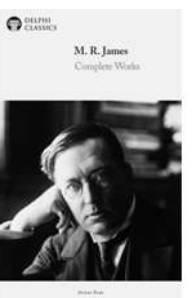
www.delphiclassics.com

HORROR CLASSICS



From gruesome ghost stories to psychological chillers, the classics are always the greatest stories...

Explore Classic Horror at Delphi Classics...



The Novels



View of London from Greenwich by J. M. W. Turner, 1825 — Lewis was born in London on 16 May 1818. The precise location of the birth is unknown.



Ottershaw, a village in the Borough of Runnymede, Surrey, which was developed in the mid-nineteenth century from a number of separate hamlets and became a parish in its own right in 1871. Besides extensive West Indian property, the Lewis family were possessed of an estate in the immediate neighbourhood of Ottershaw, the seat of the Right Honourable Sir Thomas Sewell, Bart., Master of the Rolls in the reign of George III.

The Effusions of Sensibility (1839)



Lewis was fifteen years old when he began this unfinished novel, which he intended to publish anonymously adopting a female persona: the preamble reads ‘A Pathetic Novel in the Modern Taste, being the first literary attempt of a Young Lady of tender feelings.’ The story is presented in epistolary style, in the form of letters between Lady Honoria Harrowheart and Miss Sophonisba Simper. The names of the characters clearly inform us that the story is not to be taken too seriously and indeed the style and language is almost joyously satirical.

The narrative opens with an elaborate ‘adieu’ from Honoria to her dear friend, Sophonisba. She is leaving the estate known as Dunderhead Park, a landscape of romantic ruins, dramatic vistas and ‘cloud-capt mountains’, but she is also leaving behind her dear friend. It would seem that Honoria has known sadness and disappointment in love in this rugged, yet romantic setting and Sophonisba has been her solace and support at this time— ‘All the consolation I can enjoy is drawn from your tenderness.’ Indeed, Honoria implies that had it not been for her friend’s loving comfort, she would have ended her life, as she leaves behind not just her friend and estate staff she is fond of, but also the true object of her passion, a young man who is so far nameless.

Honoria is travelling with her father, Lord Dunderhead, who is described as being completely oblivious to all the finer sentiments and is impatient of his daughter’s grief. She consoles herself with the rapturous reception she receives at a ball when she arrives in London, where the assembly is overwhelmed by her beauty and grace — although, as she writes to her friend, her innate modesty forbids her to tell of it. Yet, goes on to write, ‘The men surrounded my chair in crowds and loaded me with the highest stretched compliments and... adulation’. Then, with a more commendable show of sincerity, Honoria reveals that none of this attention means anything to her; it would only have been treasured by her had it come from the one man to whom she has given her heart.

Sophonisba’s reply to this long letter is sympathetic, but not without criticism. She is concerned that her friend will soon forget her, as she is in danger of becoming enchanted by the sights and entertainments of the capital and she entreats her Honoria not to forget the happy times they spent together in the countryside — and, of course, she is keen to know all about the man who has captured Honoria’s heart.

Although Honoria does not tell the identity of her lover to her friend, she does reveal that astonishingly she does not know his name or origins; instead, his beautiful eyes, his form and his sensibilities have captured her heart. As to what happens next, the reader will never know, as either Lewis did not finish the story, or the rest of the manuscript is lost.

As an example of how to write immature, elaborate late eighteenth-century prose — albeit satire — from the perspective of a young man, who is barely out of school, this story is a perfect example. At times it is downright laughable, as was intended, but a more serious purpose can be gained from reading this text. It offers some insights firstly into the literary ambitions of the young writer, who was never to be famous for terse or sparing prose or verse; it also illuminates the modern reader as to the attitudes of the circles Lewis moved in during his youth. In the very first letter, Honoria apologises for offering a classical quote from *Orestes* (a play by Euripides), saying that, ‘The display of a woman’s knowledge is... esteemed ostentatious and

disagreeable' — undoubtedly true at a time when it was not acceptable in most circles of polite society for a female to intellectually 'pull rank' on a man. It was also unacceptable for a woman to celebrate and use her charms against the unsuspecting males of her acquaintance and yet Honoria berates herself for being so charming and beautiful that all who meet her fall under her spell — she simply cannot help it!

There is reference in the text to an admirer of Sophonisba's, who is described as a blackamoor. Historically this word was used to describe an enslaved or recently manumitted black slave, but it may be that in the context of this story the term refers to the amoral nature of the man and not his ethnic background, as the girl refers to whitewashing the man's morals and not his appearance; the author's intentions are not entirely clear.



Portrait of Lewis by George Lethbridge Saunders, c. 1800

CONTENTS

THE EFFUSIONS OF SENSIBILITY.

LETTER I.

LETTER II.

LETTER III.

THE EFFUSIONS OF SENSIBILITY.



A FEW INTRODUCTORY pages of Lewis' first novel, called "The Effusions of Sensibility; or, Letters from Lady Honoria Harrowheart to Miss Sophonisba Simper: a Pathetic Novel in the Modern Taste, being the first literary attempt of a Young Lady of tender feelings"

[Written in Lewis' sixteenth year].

LETTER I.

Lady Honoria Harrowheart to Miss Sophonisba Simper.



“Portman-square.

“ADIEU, ye antique towers, which first beheld me receive a life destined to be past in scenes of the most heartfelt affliction! Adieu, ye verdant bowers, which have so often witnessed the emotions of a soul but too susceptible! Adieu, ye cloud-capt mountains, whose lowering height has often tempted me to end a hopeless passion, by dashing my wretched frame into your immeasurable depths! and adieu, ye moss-crowned fountains, whose glassy undulations I have so often increased with never-ceasing streams of love-lorn tears! Ye towers! ye bowers! ye mountains! ye fountains! adieu! adieu.”

“To thee, also, I bid farewell, my lively Sophonisba, whose amiable vivacity has so often cheered my despondent heart, and confined with gentle bondages of softest affection, the words of my torn, bleeding bosom! But though absent from my sight, be assured thy disinterested friendship shall never be absent from the grateful recollection of your retrospective Honoria. All the consolation I can enjoy is derived from thy tenderness; and were I deprived of it, soon should this form, the victim of sensibility, repose in the undisturbed tranquillity of sepulchral shades. For, oh! my Sophonisba, as Orestes says to his confidant in the tragedy —

“O Pylades! what’s life without a friend?”

I beg your pardon for the quotation. The display of a woman’s knowledge is, I know, generally esteemed ostentatious and disagreeable; but’ the sentiment in this case is so true, and so delicately conveyed, and the line itself so little known, that I ventured to pen it down, knowing that the “heart of my Sophonisba would echo responsive to its sentimental sweetness.

“Fair and smiling blushed the young and rubicund morn when I stepped into my father’s postchaise and four, on Friday last. The azure atmosphere smiled with touching serenity; the feathered songsters poured forth their early orisons from the May-besprinkled bushes; and the heifers, hastening to their daily labours, lowed cheerfully to hail the gold-streaked dawn. But my sad heart was incapable of sharing the calm pleasure which on all sides offered themselves to my eyes. In vain did the atmosphere smile — I could not smile at the atmosphere. In vain did the birds trill their warbling songs — I could not trill my song in concert with theirs. In vain did the heifers low — I could not low in return. Leaden sorrow oppressed my palpitating bosom, and stifled the feeble exertions of infant joy.

“As we approached the postern gate, the gardener stood there to open it. ‘Adieu, John!’ said I, ‘I wish you health and happiness.’

‘Good bye, lady,’ answered the fellow, grinning with satisfaction at the honour I had done him. The grin was not in unison with my feelings at that moment. I turned away my head to the other window, and there beheld a creature possessed of much more sentiment than the old gardener. It was his dog Pompey, who, you know, my dear Sophonisba, is blind of one eye and lame of one leg: but it is the heart which

gives value, and Pompey's more than repaid the roughness and deformity of his external appearance.

'Adieu, Pompey!' said I. The interesting animal wagged his tail and cried, 'bow! wow!' Had he said, 'Will you then leave me, my beloved protectress?' it could not have spoken to my heart with such audible expression as did its lamentable 'bow! wow!' and the peculiar style he made use of to shake his shaggy tail.

"Had I before hated the creature, his admirable behaviour at that moment would have obliterated every sentiment of unmerited aversion. As it was, the milk of human kindness boiled in my bosom, and in spite of all my papa's arguments, I resolved to descend from the carriage, and embrace the dog for the last time. Pompey instantly leapt into my arms. He was just come out of the water, and his caresses dirtied my beautiful new scarlet riding-habit from top to bottom; but it was the dirt of sensibility, and I felt myself proud of it.

"See, child,' said papa (who had also left the chaise), 'see,' said he, in a peevish tone, 'how the confounded beast has dirtied your petticoat I' You know my papa has not a heart adapted to the delicacies of sentiment. He was not moved by the affection of the dog — he felt only for my petticoat; and, incensed at the damage Pompey had done it, he gave him a few blows and pinches, and the fond animal was constrained to retire howling in the most pathetic accents imaginable. Had my papa pinched me instead of the dog, I could not have been more hurt. I sighed, cast my eyes to Heaven, and stepped into the chaise: my papa did the same; the door was closed; the postilions smacked their whips, and a few minutes carried us beyond the confines of Dunderhead Park.

"Sad and solitary were the reveries of Sophonisba's friend. Lord Dunderhead, after chiding me for encouraging the dog to spring upon me, soon fell asleep, and left me to indulge my melancholy contemplations in uninterrupted tranquillity. Then did my thoughts turn towards thee, my beloved companion; towards thee, and all those I have left for ever; since again to the castle of Dunderhead never, never, never, never, never shall I alive return! The cankering serpent of affliction preys upon my young and unguarded heart. He saps the tottering foundations of a temperament ever feeble, and the gloom of the grave will soon shadow in its obscure recesses the faded form of the hapless Honoria! Yet whilst my pale young bosom yet palpitates with hated life, it shall palpitate with affection for all those friends to whom I have now bid an eternal adieu.

"Could I bid adieu to thee also, beloved, yet tormenting image; to thee, dear yet distracting ideas; to thee, fond emotions, exaggerating remembrances, pleasing afflictions, and wishful, wandering, weeping, woes — then might the tempest-tost trembler of my bosom yet meet with a moment of desired tranquillity; but that can never be. Still must that form, once seen, always seen — once loved, always loved — flutter before my admiring eyes, and dazzle them with the blaze of its brilliant brightness: it puzzles me in my walks; it hovers round my care-stricken couch in the deep awful silence of the dreary night. Yes, amiable youth! thy words, thy looks may never be forgotten by my too susceptible sensations. Yes, amiable youth! — But as you, my dear Sophonisba, know not of whom I am speaking, I will leave the subject, and continue the account of my journey to London.

"We arrived about ten at the inn which Lord Dunderhead had fixed for us to breakfast in. My papa has always a good appetite, but those whose hearts are heavy with affliction, whose breasts are weighed down with the burden of distress, can have but small relish for rolls and butter. In complaisance, however, to my papa, I sat down to the table, but in vain did I endeavour to summon up my courage; the trickling tears

rolled down my cheek; the storm of sighs involuntarily escaped from my trembling breast; — I was in torment, I was agitated, I was agonized, and I had not the least appetite to my breakfast. I rose, and went to the window, in hopes of discovering in the distant prospect the faintly-marked battlements of Dunderhead Castle. My expectations were not deceived; I beheld them tinged by the blazing beams of the solar circle. Nor think that Juniper House was forgot; to both I breathed my most ardent vows for prosperity, and whilst melancholy yet pleasing remembrance drew tears down my cheeks, I involuntarily sighed, ‘Oh, dear Juniper House! Oh, dear, dear Dunderhead!’

“‘Eat some buttered toast, child,’ interrupted papa. Judge what must have been my feelings, when the luxury of tender grief was disturbed by so vulgar an invitation! ‘Eat some buttered toast!’ My sensibility could not sustain the shock — I sunk beneath it. ‘Cruel, cruel father!’ said I; and concealing ray tears with my white cambric handkerchief, I hurried out of the apartment, having heard Lord Dunderhead say, as I left him, ‘Plague take the girl! she’s always a whimpering.’ Yes, my beloved Sophonisba! so little idea has my father of sentiment, he called the streams which the softest sensations demanded from my tender heart, ‘a whimpering!’ But if sentiment must bear that odious name, often, very, very often, may the same emotions I then felt engage myself, and you, and all my friends, and the whole of my acquaintance, in one general, one heart-alleviating whimper!

“We proceeded to London in silence, only broken by Lord Dunderhead’s satirical remarks upon, and vehement reproaches against, all that I hold amiable. I answered but with tears. At length, after a journey which had appeared long, I doubt, to both of us, we safely arrived in Portman-square, where I am at present, and about which I have much to say to you. I must, however, defer it for the present, as I am about to dress for a ball given by the Duchess of Dingleton. I know my Sophonisba, as I have written but two sheets, would chide me for sending so brief an epistle: I shall not as yet, therefore, close my letter, but shall resume my pen immediately on my return from her grace’s entertainment.

(In continuation.)

“Why, Sophonisba, why did Heaven curse me with a form which captivates every heart? why did she give me those winning manners, that amiable languor, those enchanting graces, which doom all who behold me to bend before the altar of my unfortunate charms? How wretched is my lot! Notwithstanding the innumerable multitude of lovers I have already condemned to despair, still fresh adorers start up every moment to perplex my panting heart. I am very miserable! I am beloved, I am adored by all the men of rank, and yet wholly engrossed by an excruciating and hopeless passion for an unknown. I feel myself repugnant to the soft supplications of my numerous admirers. Pity me, Sophonisba, I merit your compassion I “When I broke off to-day, I informed you I was engaged to a ball at the Duchess of Dingleton’s. With a heavy heart did I prepare for it; yet, unwilling to disgrace my papa, I took care to decorate my person to the best advantage. Accordingly, I arrayed myself in a pale, blue-edged robe, with straw colour and slight silver border, made up in the prettiest taste in the world, all my own fancy, and never seen before. Thus ornamented, I attended my lord to the duchess’s house in Manchester-square. As I had till then never been at so large and so splendid an assembly, I own I felt rather bashful on my first entering the room; but the torrent of applause which was immediately poured upon me from all quarters soon gave me courage, and I resumed the natural

ease which belongs to me, and which my beloved Sophonisba, and those friends whose partial protection but too much honour me, have always declared made me appear more admired than any other young woman of fashion they have ever beheld. But I know this is all partiality, nor do I believe half the kind things which have been so constantly heaped upon me, though sometimes perhaps even with truth. Vanity is not one of my faults, I am very certain; and this, all who know me will readily acknowledge. But to proceed with my relation of the ball.

““ Adorable creature! charming eyes! admirable shape!’ such were the exclamations which struck my ears on entering the ball-room. My modesty and diffidence would fain have persuaded me they were addressed to somebody else; but not long was I permitted to doubt being the object of the general admiration. The men surrounded my chair in crowds, and loaded me with the highest stretched compliments and most delicately-directed adulation; but they were addressed to ears unconscious of the charms of flattery, and made no impression upon a mind inattentive to the expressive, unremitting ogling, and amorous attentions, of the surrounding multitude. My fond, feeling heart enjoyed not pleasures where no scope was allowed for the exercise of sympathetic sensations. It flew disgusted from the splendid follies of fashionable life, and sighed for the soft, secure serenity of sentimental sylvan scenes.

“As her Grace of Dingleton, on my first entering the room, had informed me she had provided me with a partner, I resisted the unremitting solicitations of the dukes, earls, baronets, and blue ribands, who, in the most eager expressions, entreated me ‘to favour them with my angelic hand’ — such were the terms they used. But I fear, my dear Sophonisba, should I repeat the unceasing marks of approbation which were paid to my person, you would be inclined to entertain a suspicion I was gratifying the silly sentiment of female vanity, by retailing my own praises. Alas! little satisfaction do I feel from such praises. What though my form be beautiful — he, from whom alone flattery would be agreeable, mixed not his voice with theirs who extolled it: what though my heart be excellent — its worth is unknown to him, by whose sensibility alone it can be equalled! Little, very little doth it avail me that my manners are — graceful, my form — divine, my mind — angelic; since the idol of my fond — tormented breast is not present, to judge of the all gracefulness of my actions, the all-divinity of my figure, and all-angelicity of my mental qualifications.

“Cruel thoughts! distracting images! heartbreaking, harrowing emotions. Forgive me, Sophonisba — I must lay down my pen and weep!

* * * * *

“Having lightened the burden of my afflicted soul by a torrent of tender tears, I proceed to inform you of the unfortunate occurrences which took place at the Duchess of Dingleton’s ball, and which assured your hapless friend another victim was to be sacrificed at the shrine of the unknown adorable. —

“Whilst I feigned to be amused by the numerous beaux who were loading me with compliments, and whilst, in some measure to repay them for the unavailing trouble they took to entertain me, I nodded to one, smiled at a second, smirked at a third, and cried ‘he! he!’ to the praises of a dozen (ah I how little did the sensations of my bosom accord with the juvenile joy, which darted delusive beams from my eyes, and played bewitching upon my blooming cheek); whilst this, I say, was my occupation, the Duchess of Dingleton, approaching me, presented a stranger as the partner whom she had already announced. I rose from my chair; presented him my hand with as

much condescension as it was possible for me to assume; and summoning all the expressions of pleasure into my countenance, my sad and pensive bosom could supply me with, permitted the stranger to lead me to the set which was already formed, and where the dancers waited for my coming to commence their expected amusement.

“My partner was about thirty, six feet high, proportionably stout, and the peculiarity of his accent soon informed me the climate of Hibernia had given him birth. His figure was fine and well-formed, his features strongly marked, and, upon the whole, very handsome; yet, I know not why, my dear Sophonisba, but I instantly conceived a presentiment he would conceive a passion for me, which in the end would be the cause of the most distressing events. I know you will chide me for ‘this idea, and call it infantine: but you have often acknowledged my skill in physiognomy, and the accurate discernment with which I have, at the first view, read the real characters of many people of our acquaintance. I must inform you, therefore that the stranger’s countenance, notwithstanding its majesty, instantly impregnated my springing ideas of him with terror and aversion. His figure, though well-proportioned, wanted that *dégagée* air, that elegant indifference which characterizes the modern young men of *ton*, and which is so infinitely becoming. His voice, though well-toned, possessed not that delicate refinement of sound, half-mutter, half-squeak, which declares the speaker attends not to what he is saying, and proves him a despiser of the sensual amusements which constitute the routine of fashionable life; and, lastly, his eyes, though large, black, and sparkling, seemed to announce a soul burning for the gratification of his despicable, voluptuous passion, whilst it scorned the pure and unadulterated delights of a delicate and platonic affection.

“Ah! how different were the eyes of the unknown charmer of my heart! A soft and touching languor reigned in his, which immediately interested sensibility in its favour: the orbs were almost concealed by his long and ebony-formed eyelids, which, half-closed, half-open, just permitted the pearly tear of sympathetic feeling to escape from the fountain of sentiment, and the glassy humidity which appeared in his eyes as he gently raised them to fix them with amiable diffidence upon my face, announced to my too sensible heart in one moment, that his bosom glowed with the deepest adoration of delicacy, the warmest fund of affection, the purest ideas of energetic attachment, and the most uncorrupted ecstasy of elevated agitations. Oh, Sophonisba, what eyes! what eyes!

“Not such were those appertaining to the partner the Duchess of Dingleton had presented to me. He spoke, bold assurance and insolent admiration; he even dared at the very first introduction to gaze at me in the face for at least half a minute, notwithstanding he could not avoid observing the modest confusion which covered my diffident cheek with blushes, whilst he continued the unabashed steadiness of his persisting gaze. Such was the external appearance of my partner. I was afterwards informed he is much admired by the women, and copied by the men; that he is in daily expectation of an earldom; that he is already in possession of immense property in Ireland; and that his present name and title is Sir Barrabas Bagshot.

“My rank being higher than any other lady in the room, I consequently stood first couple. ‘Angel of light!’ said my partner, ‘adorable charmer! wonder of the universe, and admiration of every eye! what dance do you vouchsafe to call?’ I doubted for a moment, ever making it my particular study to procure the gratification of others; I considered with myself what would be the most agreeable to the other young ladies who formed the set I had joined; and after some little thought and hesitation, I ventured to fix upon ‘Nancy Dawson.’ Nancy Dawson accordingly it was.

“No sooner did I begin to move, than exclamations of applause resounded through the ballroom. The men testified their pleasure in loudest accents as I figured out; their satisfaction was redoubled when I figured in; but I greatly dreaded, Sophonisba, lest they should expire in the torrent of ecstatic and unbounded raptures, when I went hands across and back again. Though but little sensible to the seductions of flattery, I could not but feel gratified by such public approbation; for I felt if ever I had merited praise, I deserved it at that moment. Hoping to obtain a momentary respite from the torments of every fatal passion, I attended to nothing but my footsteps, and exerted myself to the utmost. I put all my graces into action; I performed my new Hillisburg steps with the greatest exactness, and endeavoured to dance out of my head the dear destroyer of my happiness and tranquillity.

“I was beheld with wonder and admiration; every gentleman’s eye declared the sensations I excited, and every lady’s bosom flamed with rage and envy; but not long did my triumph last. Lady Mountain Mapletree, who happened to be dancing the next couple but one to me, was stung to the heart by the demon of jealousy: for long had she beheld Sir Barrabas with an eye of favour, and had been not without hopes of his offering himself and his fortune as a sacrifice to her charms. The attention he paid me, at once destroyed those seducing expectations: she trembled with vexation; she almost fainted with fury; and resolving to revenge her disappointed hopes, she maliciously dropped her fan before my feet, as I was swimming gracefully through the intricate mazes of right hand and left. I saw not the snare her malice had prepared for me; I still swam on, till my heels encountering the fatal fan, I came down plump in the middle of the ball-room.

“The gentlemen instantly flew as with one accord, to the spot where I lay extended. Vexation, confusion, and the sprain I had given my great toe, for some time prevented my replying to the anxious inquiries which were made on all quarters, to know whether I had received any injury. At length the pain abating, I began to recover myself, and according to my usual custom, burst into a flood of tears, which much relieved me. I still, however, through modesty and shame, scarcely dared to raise my eyes from the ground, till I was informed by Lord Limbertoe, who had lifted me up, that he had never seen a lady tumble so gracefully; and had received the declaration of many of the bystanders, that the fall had not deranged my dress with the most trifling impropriety.

“Though my modesty felt extremely alleviated by these assurances, and though I no longer experienced any uneasiness from my sprained toe, no entreaties could prevail upon me to return to the dance. I must mention that Sir Barrabas Bagshot was most urgent with me to comply; and when I would have objected the bad consequences which might ensue to my foot from immediate exercise, he prevented me by saying, ‘Oh! madam, what can warrant such apprehensions? Had the infernal fan broke your leg, instead of only spraining your toe, still short would have been the triumph of your presumptuous rival! Lady Honoria Harrowheart, even without legs, would be still more beautiful than Lady Mountain Mapletree, though the legs of the latter were augmented to the number of the centipedes.’

“The compliment was so gallant, and so singularly turned, that I could not avoid returning him my thanks for the favourable opinion he entertained for me, and which I was conscious of deserving so little. My chair being announced at this moment, I permitted the baronet to lead me to it; and as he put me in, he said, ‘I hope your ladyship will permit me to inquire to-morrow morning how your ladyship’s great toe does.’ This was too marked a speech for me possibly to mistake it for any thing but an open declaration of the most ardent passion. I blushed violently; looked down in

confusion, and hesitated for some minutes; till at length recovering myself, I replied, with admirable presence of mind, 'Sir, you are very good, and I shall be extremely happy to see you.' The chair was then shut up, and I returned home, to communicate to my dear Sophonisba the vexatious events of the first evening I have passed in London.

"What can I do, my dear friend, and what will become of the unfortunate Honoria? Barbarous papa! Why did you force me to visit the dreaded metropolis? But too well did I foresee the fatal effects of my charms: but too well did I foresee they would attract new admirers, and lo! my apprehensions are already justified. That Sir Barrabas adores me to distraction, I cannot doubt; and that he means immediately to demand me of my father, I perceive full as clearly; since with no other intention could he have been so eager to obtain permission to inquire after me. But all his endeavours will be vain: I am resolved never to bestow my hand without my heart; and that, ah, woe is me! is in the power of one who seems to be ignorant of its value. 'But who is that one?' perhaps, will ask, my Sophonisba. 'Alas! my faithful, my affectionate friend! — I know no more than you do.'

"Adieu, my beloved Sophonisba; write to me soon, and assure me this long epistle has been acceptable to you. I must retire to bed, for my wax-lights are burnt to the snuff, though the slumbers of soft repose have not yet deigned to woo me to my care-fraught pillow. Alas! a year, a sad tedious year has elapsed since the blessings of sleep have fluttered round my couch; and its valued oblivion has but too long been a stranger to the eyes of

"The soul-affected, love-distracted

"HONORIA HARROWHEART."

LETTER II.

Miss Sophonisba Simper to Lady Honoria Harrowheart.



“Simper House.

“A thousand heart-breathed expressions of gratitude does Sophonisba entreat the zephyrs to bear to her angelic Honoria, in return for her very long and very interesting letter. But need I say her long letter was interesting? Whatever *belongs* to Honoria must be interesting to her tender friend. Excuse the pleasantries, my dear; you know the playfulness of my disposition will sometimes outrun my discretion; but your regard for the punster will induce you to overlook the indifference of the pun.

“The transports of my joy at receiving your elegantly-written epistle were too great to be expressed; but I must quarrel with you a little for not having mentioned my inamorata Lord Cypher in it. I assure you I feel much hurt at the neglect, and so does he too, poor man! though his resentment does not signify much to any body, you know. It so happened that he received the letters from the postman, and hastened to announce to me (as he very justly imagined) the pleasing intelligence of a letter from my Honoria. ‘So, sir,’ said I briskly, as he came near me on the terrace, where he happened to be gazing on some blue and gold butterflies, which were flitting beneath me, and fancying myself to be just such another gaudy, fluttering, summer insect. ‘I hope you are well, madam,’ replied his lordship very gravely, with one of his low bows, and never moving a muscle of his odd whimsical countenance, in spite of the comic style in which I addressed him, ‘I hope you are well, madam; how do you do this morning?’

“‘Do, my lord?’ said I, a little maliciously. ‘Do? Never the better for seeing your lordship I assure you.’ My papa and mamma who were with me burst out in a violent fit of laughter at the shrewdness of my reply; but the person against whom my wit was directed, seemed to think that it cut rather too deep. He assumed a feigned air which I did not imagine the creature had presumption enough to put on before his sovereign queen and mistress. ‘If you are not glad to see madam,’ said he, ‘you will be at least happy to see this letter from your friend Lady Honoria,’ and at the same moment he drew the dear from his *pocket*. I seized it eagerly. ‘Give it me, man,’ cried I, ‘give it me this instant;’ but would you believe it? he had the boldness, the insolence and assurance to hold it tight, though I rapped his knuckles with my fan to make him release it.

“No.” replied his lordship, summoning up all the little briskness which exists in his monotonous composition. “I must be paid before I let it go.”

“Paid indeed!” cried I, “I should not have thought of you being paid!”

“Nay” said he, “you shall not have the letter without its price, which is no less than a kiss from those coral lips.”

“Yes, Honoria, the creature had the confidence to ask for a kiss! I was shocked to death at barely thinking of the horrible concussion of lips; but a thought at once struck me, which at once punished the wretch for his shameful wishes, and at the same time gratified my own taste, by executing a little trick brilliant and replete with genuine wit and humour. ‘What,’ said I, ‘you must be paid, must you?’— Yes — he dared to replicate his pro position, wounding my ears a second time by mentioning the odious

price he exacted. This gave me fresh desire to execute my artful invention. ‘Then paid you shall be,’ answered I; and suddenly snatching the packet from his grasp with one hand, with the other I gave him a box on the ear as hard as I could inflict, and then ran swiftly away; laughing heartily at the subtilty and originality of the idea, and delighted with the success which attended its execution.

“You see, my dear Honoria, it is in vain I labour and *belabour* to make this blackamoor, *black no more*. No pains or instructions of mine can possibly wash him white. You know how earnestly I have endeavoured to efface from his mind the desires for sensual pleasures, which now disfigure it, and convince him how much more noble and refined are the gratifications which result from the system of platonic affection. But his gross English constitution is incapable of imbibing sentiments whose texture is so pure and delicate. What inducement have I not set before his eyes, what allurements have I not made use of to engage his adoption of my ideas?

* * * *

“My eyes flashed beams of indignation on him at this insolent protestation; ‘Hence, wretch!’ cried I, ‘get out of the room, and never see me more.’ He instantly obeyed without a murmur, and by his submission something abated the rage which his boldness had excited in me. Indeed, to do him justice, he has many good qualities; his mind is open, generous, polished, and affectionate; nor is his person by any means to be despised: but then he is licentious and that horrible defect more than destroys all possible virtues. I can pity your affliction my Honoria; do you pity my weakness: for, alas (I am but too sensible, this faulty monster is in possession of my whole affection.

“Yes, thou friend of my bosom, I pity your affliction more than language can express; but still more should I pity it, if I knew what it was. Whatever occasions your distress I am sure it must be elegant, or else it would not belong to Honoria. Unbosom yourself then to one who takes the sincerest interest in your fate; let me weep over your sorrows, for weep I am sure I shall: and though I am unacquainted with one syllable of your adventures, I am confident beforehand they must be filled with the very essence of delicacy, and primed with the profusion of susceptibility. I remember, my dear friend, from your very cradle, you were marked for the daughter of feeling: never shall I forget how you used to steal into the butler’s pantry to set the imprisoned mice at liberty. Nay, when you were but ten years old, as if you were marked for the protectress of the unfortunate, the old turkey-cock, when pursued by Doll Trot, the cookmaid, fled to your arms for shelter, and found a refuge in hiding himself under your dress. Then what eloquent discourses used you to pronounce upon the sin and luxury which was used in making a pigeon-pie! What admirable oratory did you display, when persuading the tabby cat she committed murder in mumbling mice! What excellent arguments in favour of liberty did you deduce from the cage of your grandmamma’s poll-parrot! — oratory so peculiar, so persuasive, and so pathetic, that it drew tears from all who heard it, except the insensible animal to whom it was directed. In truth, my dear, you were so surprisingly clever at ten years old, that if I had not been an eyewitness I could never have believed it.

“I promise myself then great pleasure (if you will be so good as to comply with the request of your fond Sophonisba) from reading how very unfortunate you have been, and how extremely miserable you are at present; for what can be so entertaining to a sentimental bosom as the sorrows and afflictions of one’s friends? I trust, therefore, you will let me have the whole account by the next post; informing me what name honours the happy man who is fortunate enough to possess the heart of my Honoria; and, also, which is the country from whence he comes, and what the region to which he is going. In short, let me be instructed in every particular; let whatever hath

relation to you, be *related* to me; let me read your whole heart; let me know all your distresses, and the more there are of them the better. Ah, how sweet! how tender will it be to cry my eyes out over the irremediable misfortunes of my dearest friend I “But, ‘friend’ did I say? Ah! perhaps you no longer esteem me your friend! Attracted and seduced by the brilliant scenes of London, some titled one now possesses the first place in your affection, and the simple Sophonisba is forgot, and you despise those pleasures which once afforded such infinite delight. Ah! if such contempt invade your bosom, it will overturn the ecstatic structure friendship and kindness erected there when the opening dawn of years yet smiled tranquil upon my soft, my amiable Honoria. Recall to your memory those scenes of innocent delight, those pastimes so pure, those enjoyments so serene. Think how we used to chase the gold-spotted butterflies in the early morning — think how in the heat of day we used to seat ourselves beneath an o’erbowering haystack, and reading some sweetly-afflicting novel, cry in concert; and think, oh think, how in the afternoon we used to drink syllabub warm from the cow! These once could charm you — these once could interest your sensibility. Ah! let them not have lost their effect: still let them charm: still let them interest: nor shrink infanticided by fashion and magnificence. Think not the pale-eyed moon less splendid than half-a-hundred wax candles, or a wreath of natural roses twined carelessly round your lovely tresses, less becoming to your complexion than a hat and feathers fabricated by Mademoiselle La Poupee.

“Vain terrors, hence my bosom shall no longer encourage your recital. In vain shall the wax-candles blaze around her in vain shall the hat and feathers rear their nodding plumes — Honoria shall prefer the moon — Honoria shall stick to the roses — yes, she shall still sigh for the pleasures of rural felicity, for the syllabub, and the haystacks, for the friend who loves her with such sympathetic sentiment as does

“Her ever fond, her ever affectionate

“SOPHONISBA SIMPER.”

LETTER III.

Lady Honoria Harrowheart to Sophonisba Simper.



“Portman-square.

“Oh! Sophonisba, what a task do you enjoin me! You desire me to relate the accident which brought me acquainted with the monarch of my bosom, and describe the chain which intralld me — the chain from which I never must be freed.

How can I rend open the wounds of my heart, scarcely closed? How can I recall the beginning of my woes? How can I tell you the name he does honour to? How can I tell you the country blest by his presence? How can I tell you the land which may boast of his birth? and, in short, how can I tell you, what I don't know myself?

“He did not inform me how he called himself, nor what was his condition; I know not whence he came, when I met him, nor whither he went when he left me; and I am not quite sure that I should know his face again if I were to see it. He was muffled up in a great-coat which concealed the lower part of his countenance; his beaver, flapped down, concealed the upper; and I could only distinguish his large speaking eyes between the interstices of his cape and his cocked-hat. It was not therefore the external beauty of his form which insnared me, — no, I was caught by his voice. Oh! what a voice! And by his heart. Oh! what a heart! all sensibility, all tenderness and delicacy. I am certain I could distinguish the first from those of all other men, though I heard it in a chorus; and the second, though I saw it in spirits in an apothecary's shop. The little, therefore, which I know about him (alas! that little is too much) I will in obedience to your wishes commit to paper, and you may expect therefore the history of my woes and perturbations, either borne on the tempest of my sighs, or on horseback by the general post. It will, however, require some time to execute a relation I shall interrupt so frequently by my tears. You must not, therefore, be impatient if a week should elapse before you hear from me; and I do not believe it will be possible for me to satisfy your curiosity till Saturday se'nnight.”

* * * * *

[Whether Miss Simper's curiosity was ultimately satisfied or not, is more than we are able to determine; — but that of the reader, if he have any, is destined to remain unappeased, — for here the fragment ends.]

DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample