

## "The Man at Home" Series (1798)

### Charles Brockden Brown

[Text prepared by Duncan Faherty (Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center) and Ed White (Tulane University)]

The following text is a series of periodical sketches published by Charles Brockden Brown in early 1798. Because of the series' discussion of isolation and epidemic, we have quickly pulled together the following transcription for use as universities in many parts of the world end face-to-face instruction and shift to "social isolation." We hope to have a fully-annotated and introduced edition prepared for the fall semester. The following transcription was prepared by Ed White and Michael Drexler (Bucknell) for a "Roundtable on the Canon" at the Sixth Biennial Conference of the Charles Brockden Brown Society, held at Technische Universität Dresden in October, 2008. The original text was at that time generously provided by the Charles Brockden Brown Electronic Archive and Scholarly Edition, and the CBBEASE has allowed us to present the text again. A scholarly edition of the text will appear in 2021 in volume 2 of *Collected Writings of CBB (Bucknell UP), The Monthly Magazine and Other Writings, 1789-1802*, edited by Matthew Pethers, Leonard Von Morze, and Hilary Emmett. Further information about the CBB edition project can be found at <https://brockdenbrown.cah.ucf.edu/>.

**Suggestions for further readings.** We offer here a short list of related readings, and given the temporary closure of many university libraries' stacks, have provided links to electronic copies.

Alan Axelrod's *Charles Brockden Brown: An American Tale* (1983) suggests that the narrator of "The Man at Home" may be "border[ing] on insanity" (109); the text also demonstrates that "one's life is no longer one's own," in a complex society, but is "contingent upon the actions of others" (143). Axelrod also

insists that the fever epidemic must be read metaphorically, noting for instance that the narrator is "infected" by another's debts (157). See:

[https://books.google.com/books?id=6QbUAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA13&dq=Alan+Axelrod%E2%80%99s+Charles+Brockden+Brown:+An+American+Tale&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwies4HFlanoAhUkiOAKHT9NDroQ6AEwAHoECAQQAg#v=onepage&q=man%20at%20home&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=6QbUAAAAQBAJ&pg=PA13&dq=Alan+Axelrod%E2%80%99s+Charles+Brockden+Brown:+An+American+Tale&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwies4HFlanoAhUkiOAKHT9NDroQ6AEwAHoECAQQAg#v=onepage&q=man%20at%20home&f=false)

Steven Watts, in 1994's *The Romance of Real Life*, described the pieces as a "critique of a society on the make" (65), and reflective of Brown's concern with economic matters (66). The pieces themselves, according to Watts, were part "fiction, part essay," with a characteristically "rambling plot" (66). See: [https://books.google.com/books?id=EhO9DwAAQBAJ&pg=PT4&dq=Steven+Watts,+in+1994%E2%80%99s+The+Romance+of+Real+Life,&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks\\_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjz74bslqnoAhUyYjUKHZ8VDooQ6AEwAHoECAAYQAg#v=onepage&q=man%20at%20home&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=EhO9DwAAQBAJ&pg=PT4&dq=Steven+Watts,+in+1994%E2%80%99s+The+Romance+of+Real+Life,&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjz74bslqnoAhUyYjUKHZ8VDooQ6AEwAHoECAAYQAg#v=onepage&q=man%20at%20home&f=false)

In the essay "Fictional Feeling: Philosophy, Cognitive Science, and the American Gothic," James Dawes situated "The Man at Home" among Brown's experimental explorations of the link between the physiological, the affective, and the cognitive. In this context, the Baxter story in particular suggested the problem of how events exert physiological force, even if unreal, because we believe those events are real (453). Dawes moves quickly to what he finds the more interesting problem articulated in *Arthur Mervyn*, in which things in which we actively do not believe also exert physiological force or influence. See Dawes, "Fictional Feeling: Philosophy, Cognitive Science, and the American Gothic." *American Literature*, 76.3 (2004), 437-466.

In their introduction to their edition of *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, Philip Barnard & Stephen Shapiro provide deeply researched historical, biographical, and contextual

information about Brown's life and career. In particular they detail how, "Brown's interrelated fever narratives, all from 1798–1799," (including "The Man at Home" series and the novels *Arthur Mervyn* and *Ormond*) draw on his 1798 experience of living through a yellow fever epidemic. Barnard and Shapiro have made this introduction freely accessible and it can be found here: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/people/shapirodrstephen/barnard.shapiro-introduction-to-charles-brockden-browns-ormond-or-the-secret-witness.pdf>

Finally, in one of the few pieces of scholarship to exclusively consider "The Man at Home," Joseph J. Letter argues that the series should be considered as "a performative vehicle," one in which Brown "articulates an alternate space-time, one that gradually reveals links between present and past" (711). For Letter, the series exemplifies the "theory of historical fiction that Brown would later distinguish as 'romance,' and equally important, suggests a relation between writer and reader that demands imaginative engagement as a prelude to collective action" (711). See Letter, "Charles Brockden Brown's Lazaretto Chronotope Series: Secret History and 'The Man at Home.'" *Early American Literature*, 50.3 (2015), 711–735.

## I

## ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

For the Weekly Magazine.

THE MAN AT HOME.;

No. I.

[*The Weekly Magazine of Original Essays, Fugitive Pieces, and Interesting Intelligence* (Feb. 3, 1798)]

I KNOW not whether my pen will afford me any amusement in my present condition. I have been little accustomed to the use of it, but I have nothing else to do, and my present situation stands in need of being beguiled of its cares. I am without books, and am not permitted to leave my chamber. I have, therefore, no alternative. This, or nothing is my lot. I cannot consent to pass a life of inactivity. But what shall I write? There is something whimsical in this undertaking. For a man of my habits, at the age of sixty, to sit down to the writing desk! Nothing would have been less expected a month ago, and nothing but the unfortunate circumstances in which I am placed would reconcile me to it.

It may not be an unseasonable introduction to the series of remarks that may successively suggest themselves to my pen, to relate the occasion of my present mode of life. I shall pass over my early history.—My desires were, at all times, moderate. I laboured not for riches, but security. When I had attained what I deemed sufficient, I ceased to make any further exertions. I invested my little property in funds, which appeared to me safest and most productive, and have lived many years upon the product. I reasonably looked forward to a speedy termination of a long life, but hoped that, while I lived, I should be exempt from the pressure of indigence. This hope is disappointed. This chamber is my prison. I must confine myself to it, on penalty, if I leave it, of changing it for a prison indeed.

There is a person in this city with whom, in the earlier part of my life, I was connected in trade. When I retired from this occupation, he did not chuse to follow my example. Our profits had been equal, and he could not deny that he had sufficient for all the purposes of comfortable and respectable subsistence; but the alternative that presented itself to his imagination was that of doing something or nothing. If he relinquished his present pursuits, it was not for the sake of engaging in others. His education had supplied him with no resources independent of his profession. To this, therefore, he continued to devote himself, because it supplied him with those pleasures which flowed from the employment of his faculties, and because it gratified him with the prospect of increasing opulence.

Prosperity seemed to attend his efforts. The intercourse between us ceased, from this time, to be very intimate; but, nevertheless, when it took place, was cordial. All pecuniary transactions terminated with our partnership. I needed not to borrow, and was not rich enough to lend; besides, the flourishing state of his affairs did not compel him to resort to this expedient: At least it was my fortune never to have been importuned by him on this account, till within the last two months. His mercantile engagements had engrossed his attention so much, and our walks led us in such different directions, that I had not seen him during the greater part of the past year. The visit that I received from him, somewhat more than two months ago, was very unexpected. I was seated by my evening fire when he entered my parlour. We accosted each other in a manner that became old associates.

He brought with him an air of anxiety and embarrassment which I could not help noticing. This afforded him an opportunity of explaining the purpose of his visit. It was to request my endorsement to notes, which his own credit would not enable him to negotiate. He stated it as little more than a formal thing. He wanted the cash for an occasion that was extremely urgent, but should be certainly able to replace it at the

period assigned. He shewed me the notes. I summed up the whole amount of them, but thought it my duty to deliberate before I performed an act which could not be retrieved.

The sum was little less than my whole fortune. The whole was but little in itself, but it was every thing to me. At present I lived at my ease; all that I desired I possessed; and the amount of my possession was little more than the sum, to the payment of which my superscription would bind me. Should I superscribe or not? I firmly rely on the veracity of this man. I have had ample experience of his mercantile integrity and wariness. He knows, according to the vulgar saying, what he is about. All other properties of a rational creature seem in his case to have been absorbed in the caution with which he forms, and the punctuality with which he executes, his professional engagements. His bottom is a sound one, for it consists, not in floating planks merely, but in houses and acres. We must, in the business of human life, confide in foregoing calculations. We must act on the supposition that events will come. We cannot postpone our resolutions till they have actually arrived. This debt will be discharged by my friend in due season. My prediction is not infallible, but it is as plausible as can be wished. When this event happens, all uncertainty will vanish, but it has not yet happened. There is consequently some reason for doubt, but as little reason as the nature of the thing will admit. If the money be paid by him, I shall have sustained no injury, but I shall have conferred a considerable benefit.

But suppose that it is not paid. Then I am undone. My comfort and my ease will be ravished from me. I must exchange serenity and affluence, for poverty and death; for I could not expect long to survive a disaster of that kind. It is much that I shall set to hazard, for the hazard embraces my "All." It is not merely the luxury and abundance of my present condition that are included in it: My existence itself is at stake. But this may be equally asserted on a thousand other occasions.

Twice a-week I go to market. It is winter, and I of course chuse the sunny side of the way. I am not deterred from this by reflecting, that on this side of the street there is an house building, under whose scaffolds I must pass. Through carelessness or design, a brick may fall upon my head. The blow will destroy my life or my intellects. These considerations would not induce me to avoid it, though for this purpose I have only to cross the street. The consequences that will flow from the negligence or wickedness of this man are equally momentous. But I have much more reason to confide in the cautiousness and probity of my friend, than on those of a mason or a mason's attendant.

Observing my silence, (for, while engaged in these reflections, I was silent), my companion renewed his importunities. I cut him short by fixing my name as he desired.

It was nothing but writing my name in the space of an inch. The employment scarcely demanded a moment. The act, habit had rendered almost spontaneous and mechanical. It was done, and what was the consequence? The period elapsed, my friend was incapable of making good his engagements, the law has been resorted to, and a writ is issued for arresting me. There is no one to whom I can apply to be my surety, and in order to elude this process, I have changed my lodging. My washer-woman is a good creature. Her dwelling is an humble, but not miserable one. It is in the suburbs of the city. I have taken possession of her best chamber, for which, indeed, I shall pay her a good rent. And here I must confine myself to avoid the inconveniences of a different kind of prison.

I am very well known in this city, and since I am desirous of making my fellow citizens believe that I have gone into the country, it is necessary to make myself a rigid recluse. This necessity may not endure long; but meanwhile it is requisite for me to pursue some employment compatible with my restraints, from which amusement may be derived. It is for this purpose that

I have taken up my pen. I have no particular object in view. It is not my intention to compose a book; unless the papers that day after day may be scribbled over shall gradually enlarge into something that may merit the name. My mind has never been listless or vacant. I have no reason to expect that my present motives to mental activity will be ineffectual; that I shall think with less variety and swiftness now that I have, in some degree, assumed the task of recording my thoughts.

I write to myself. The pen is not, in this instance, an instrument of communication. There is no stopping, nor retarding, nor hastening the current of thought. My pen will move at an unequal and much more tardy pace. How far this circumstance will affect the coherence of my lucubrations, I shall hereafter be informed, when I shall feel myself disposed to review what I shall have written. I suppose I shall frequently offend against perspicuity, conciseness, and all the laws of just writing. This, in my mode of careless composition, will scarcely be avoidable. What then? I write not to instruct or please others. I know mankind too well to imagine any power in my eloquence to conquer their perverseness. I am too well acquainted with myself to suppose myself an able caterer for the taste of the enlightened few. Besides, if I were so well qualified in these respects, the present state of my thoughts would not allow me to prosecute any regular design. I have at hand neither instruments to gaze at heaven, nor books to survey mankind. My memory is, indeed stored, and my imagination never was a sterile sand; but the power of deduction and arrangement are, to a certain degree, taken away by the consciousness of present difficulties. I intend nothing more than my own amusement. I may, indeed, be hasty in imagining that the means which I shall use for this selfish purpose, may not, likewise, be adapted to a purpose more extensive. Whether this be so or not, will depend upon my character. Habits of accurate reasoning and perspicuous expression may be formed like any other habits. Habit renders

that species of action to which it relates, not only easy, but spontaneous, whether it be the rivaling of Handel on the harpsichord, or Archimedes in mechanical invention, or Edwards in metaphysical analysis. It may be that I cannot think without the illuminations of method or the rigour of demonstration. These principles, in consequence of long practice, may now be incorporated with my intellectual constitution. The contrary to all this may be true. There is, no doubt, evidence on both sides of this question, but I shall not pretend to compare them or to decide. It suffices that one end, agreeable employment, will be answered by my penning. If they benefit mankind, it will be indirectly, and without design.

One thing, if I act at all, I cannot avoid performing. I must, necessarily, in the wildest of my reveries, exhibit my own character. There is nothing human which is beneath rational curiosity. The character of no man can fail of being usefully contemplated. No man, who in any way puts forth the energies of his mind, can fail of furnishing a subject of observation. His conduct is an example or a warning. It may display something to be shunned, or something worthy of imitation. If my exertions at the pen should ever be known to the world, they may in this respect at least be useful, that they exhibit a specimen of misapplication of time, and a wrong employment of the mind.

## II

### ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS. THE MAN AT HOME.;

No. II. [*Weekly Magazine* (Feb. 10, 1798)]

GO thy ways for an honest creature. I cannot explain to thee, in an intelligible way, the true nature of my condition; or perhaps I

might be disposed to gratify thy curiosity. I have no need to dread from thee any imputations on the honesty of my proceeding. Casuists have, long ago, settled that point. By casuists such as thou, it would never be brought into question. That action may be wrong, which law has thought proper to prohibit and punish. He that perpetrates it may be truly criminal. The action by which we incur punishment is unjust, but what is to be said of the means by which we elude the penalty? No doubt an highwayman is criminal, but after the commission of the deed, he endeavours to elude his pursuers. Do these endeavours enhance his guilt? When taken, and dungeon-doomed, and fettered, does duty restrain him from breaking his chains, and restoring himself, by the exertion of dexterity or strength, to liberty?

By contracting a debt, I have made myself liable to imprisonment. It was wrong to make myself a debtor. By payment I reduce myself to beggary, and make a very inconsiderable addition to the gorged purse of my creditor. Still it may be wrong to with-hold payment. That is a position which I shall not, at present, controvert. All I am anxious to prove is, the rectitude of thus avoiding the penalty. Pay or go to prison, is the sentence. I will not pay. There I may be wrong. But I will not go to prison. There I may be right.

My landlady's inquisitiveness is amusing. If I could completely gratify it I would; but that is impossible. She is as illiterate as the majority of mankind, and as all the members of her class are. How impossible to make her understand the origin of that claim which is made upon me! Her education disqualifies her from comprehending a sentence of any degree of abstractedness. The very terms that I use are, to her, like those of another language. They are sounds without a meaning. It is not commonly observed how different mankind are in this respect. No phrases are more ambiguous and deceitful than such as affirm of some person that he understands this or that language. The language which is spoken among us is English, and consists of a

certain number of words. A part of these are purely technical, and, though an essential portion of the language, can be understood by those unacquainted with the sciences to which they belong, as little as if they were Japanese or Slavonic. There is another portion which cannot be said to be technical, but which, to the mass of mankind, is equally without a meaning. The circumstance by which words of this class are most obviously characterised, is that of their having a Roman origin. Almost all that is valuable in our tongue flows from this source. Look into any argumentative or eloquent discourse, and you will be astonished at the part which the Romans have taken in the formation of our language: but, to those destitute of the benefits of reading and study, this portion of our language is unknown.

Take one whose reading has been confined to a fairy tale, and whose writing to the affixing of his signature, a moral essay of Rousseau and of Hawkesworth will be almost equally unintelligible to him, and nearly for the same reason, the unfrequency and uncouthness of the terms that are employed. I have met with sailors on the Mole of Gibraltar, who were said to speak, not only that mongrel dialect known by the name of *Lingua Franca*, but all the languages used on the coasts of the Mediterranean, from the Greek of Smyrna to the Portuguese. Yet in what sense can they be said to know French or Spanish? Catalan peasants and Provençal fishermen know little of their own tongue, but an English sailor knows infinitely less than either. Perhaps three score phrases of most common use, and applicable to the most ordinary objects and occasions, are the utmost bounds of his knowledge. That they understand French and Spanish, may perhaps be said of the readers of Moliere and Calderon. If the same may be affirmed of the drunken and stupid wretches whom I have met with on the quays of Barcelona and Marseilles, our meaning must surely be widely different, though our terms are the same.

I once made a friend of mine very merry, by answering, to the admiration he expressed at my negligence of foreign languages, that I must first learn English. This he supposed was already done, since my mother and my nurse were English women. I was not displeased with his laughter, and took no trouble to rectify his mistake. I could not convince him of the value of perspicuity, or explain to him the difficulty and *seldomness* of its attainment. The term itself was to him devoid of meaning. The marking of minute gradations and diversities among terms reputed synonymous, has been justly considered as matter of abstruse science and Herculean labour. The task has never been performed: and yet, if a knowledge of the meaning of its words, be implied in the knowledge of a language, he that never performed it, in relation to the English tongue for example, cannot, in an absolute sense, be said to understand English. It is one thing to affix no meaning, and another to affix an imperfect meaning, to sounds. The first is doubtless the more gross species of ignorance, but in that degree in which either is exhibited by us, it is proper to say that we are unacquainted with language.

I have held various dialogues with my landlady. I desired to obtain and impart information highly useful to me in my present circumstances. But this was not all. I have often prolonged the conversation merely with a view to mark the scantiness of her vocabulary. If she dived into my motives, perhaps she would be angry or sullen. Yet, in acting thus, I intended no evil. I extracted no food for contempt from her errors. They suggested various contemplations on the principles of human intercourse, and on the causes that produce such wide differences between beings who, in their primitive conformation, and, perhaps, in their ultimate destiny, are the same. I will not deny that I derived a secret complacency from reflecting that my lot was somewhat different from Kate's, but with respect to her, my emotions were those of compassion rather than of scorn.

She is nearly as old as myself. She was born in a cottage on the banks of the Shannon. At the age of fifteen she ran away from her parents, who treated her with cruelty and neglect. She merely aimed at relieving herself from this inconvenience. No other means suggested themselves than that of placing herself beyond their reach. As to greater evils that might flow from this proceeding, she was incapable of foreseeing or estimating them. The precept, requiring us to think not of the morrow, was literally fulfilled by her. The incidents of her journey from the neighbourhood of Kilaloe to Limerick have made an indelible impression on her memory. There is a rude but picturesque minuteness in her recital of it. If her own story be worthy of credit, what most excited her wonder, when she had gotten to the distance of twenty miles was, that the world was so large.

She quickly repented of her purpose, but was induced to persist by the fear of the punishment that awaited her return. She strolled, at length, into Limerick. When she was hungry, she begged for food. She had nothing wherewith to buy it, and what she herself would have done to one in a similar condition, she was prone to imagine would be readily performed by others. She was quickly cured of this error, and found, that unwearied importunities were necessary to procure the smallest pittance. Luckily for her, on the third day after her arrival in this city, a man of substantial and plain appearance, noticed the wanderer. He made inquiries into her condition, and finding her suitable to his purpose, made proposals which were eagerly accepted.

M'Farlane was a thrifty tailor, industrious and honest, with a numerous family. Kate was hired to relieve the mother of the cares of two infants. This new situation was paradise, when compared with her former. Her simple and affectionate disposition soon gave her an interest in the welfare of the babes. Her mistress was of an equable and quiet temper, and every thing contributed to her content. Many years were passed in this state; till, at length, M'Farlane was seized with the rage of emigration.

He transported himself and his family to Philadelphia. Here he pursued his trade, with no essential change in his domestic or professional engagements. His children grew up, and were dispersed in all quarters by the spirit of adventure, or by marriage. One of them was a colonel in the revolutionary army. He received a wound before the walls of Quebec, which crippled him for life. He had strength, however, remaining to cultivate his two hundred acres on the banks of the Susquehanna. Three younger sons were leaders in the measures by which Kentucky was reared into independence. The daughters had a like wandering destiny, and the old couple were left with no other companion than their faithful Kate. M'Farlane laid aside the needle, and lived at his ease. He ate his meals in quiet, and, in the intervals, walked a certain round for the benefits of exercise, and this distribution of time was unalterably maintained for several years.

This monotonous life was destined to terminate in 1793. They resided near the spot where the pestilence began. They were alarmed and astonished, but could not prevail upon themselves to remove. To make so essential a change in their system as to leave the city, was equivalent to dying. They were affrighted, but they knew not at what. All was panic and confusion around them. Nothing to be heard but fearful rumours, and nothing to be seen but fugitives from danger, and the paleness of consternation in those that remained. There was no place whither they could retire. All beyond the precincts of the city was to them like a new world. Their curiosity or interest had never carried them beyond the two rivers. Their feelings, without assuming a definite form, amounted to the preference of death where they were, to life in any other place.

Their fears disappeared with the novelty of their situation. Danger, by becoming familiar, ceases to be dreaded. Panic scarcely ever fails to be succeeded by security. A groundless and disproportionate terror is generally converted by habit into a confidence no less over-weening and delusive. The women

resumed, in a short time, their ancient tranquillity, and the old man his customary walks. A few beings like himself assembled every morning in his porch, to receive and impart the current information; to examine the list of yesterday's mortality, and compare different accounts. When this casual assembly was dissolved, M'Farlane continued his ramble, which he now extended so as to include the Potter's-Field. Here he spent some minutes daily in viewing the train of what has been expressly termed the *dead-carts*, and numbering the bodies that were hastily consigned to the earth.

The pest had attained the ultimate point of its progress, and was now declining, when the old couple sickened, one after the other, and died. Kate was their sole attendant and nurse. Her affection for them supplied her with resolution. She had not time to reflect on the loneliness of her lot, before she was herself seized with the reigning malady. She was discovered by the superintendants of the sick, and conveyed, nearly in a state of insensibility, to the hospital. She was one of the few who came out of that noisome and contagious receptacle, alive.

She had now a subsistence to seek. She was ill qualified to make provision for herself by her former habits and experience. A certain portion of mechanical drudgery, pertaining to the offices of cook and washer, fell to her share in the family of M'Farlane; but the supplying of food, cloathing, and shelter, constituted the province of her superiors. Marketing is an art, skill in which can only be conferred by practice. In this respect many a mathematical adept was on a level with Kate. She was as ignorant as Newton of the art of trafficking for eggs and butter, and committed mistakes no less egregious when accident assigned to her this duty. To stipulate for the possession of an habitation, or the transfer of an handkerchief, was too much for her ignorance.

Necessity, however, is an excellent teacher. By means which she was hardly able to assign, she rented a room, bargained

for soap and starch, and furnished herself with kettles and tubs. This she was unable to perform of herself. No knowledge would supply the place of money. Stock is requisite, whether we project a manufactory of porcelain, or the trade of a linen-washer. Stock may, either in part or in whole, be supplied by credit. Unhappily for Kate, she had neither stock nor credit. While in this state of forlornness and uncertainty, her good fortune led her, one evening, to my kitchen fire. I lived in her master's neighbourhood, and was not inattentive to the effects which his death must produce upon the condition of his servant. She told her story to my housekeeper, without expecting relief. I chanced to be near enough to overhear her tale. Next day we had an interview, and by my purse, credit, and personal exertions, easily placed her in her present situation. The expence was trivial, and the efforts slight; yet they conferred upon this being the highest benefit which her constitution of mind capacitated her for receiving. They have filled her honest bosom with the utmost fervour of gratitude, and insured to me all the services which she is able to perform.

I did not foresee my present calamity, in consequence of which the good offices of this woman became of the utmost moment. Among the reflections which the establishment of Kate, and the effusions of her gratitude, excited, it never occurred to me that I should ever possibly stand in need of her beneficence: yet only four years have gone by, and I am under the necessity of claiming her friendship. I gave her competence and comfort; she saves me from a gaol. Perhaps it is imbecility and prejudice, that occasion my antipathy; but true it is, that he who rescues me from prison has benefited me not less, in my own opinion, than he who should relieve me from the gallows.

## III

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.  
THE MAN AT HOME.;  
No. III.[*Weekly Magazine* I.3 (Feb. 17, 1798)]

I AM sitting here employed in this way, from a notion that it is the only practicable employment: It is the only exercise, as I suppose, within my reach. This perhaps is an error. In one sense my sphere is a small one. My observation is limited to an area of twelve feet square; but surely it becomes me to examine every thing within this space. If it be small, the examination is proportionably easy. If our means are few, the motives seem to be enhanced for making the best use of them of which they are capable.

It is three or four days since I first occupied this room, and yet, if I had left it this morning, I should have been unable to describe my dwelling. My eye has glanced over, and my feet measured every plank of it, and yet so inattentive have I been to external objects, that I can describe nothing. There are furniture, and walls, and windows. Thus much I know; but as to the shape, texture, and colour of these I am almost entirely at a loss. In the most vulgar objects, a scrutinizing spirit can discover new properties and relations. In a scene that, to ordinary observers, is monotonous and uniform, he finds an exhaustless source of reflection and inquiry. In a situation where no addition to his knowledge or happiness is expected, he is frequently supplied with the materials of memorable improvement.

I entered this room as if it were a dungeon. I was fearful that my own resources would be insufficient to enable me to sustain the burthen of life. I was sure that the contractedness and sameness of the scene would compel me to resort to those

resources. From them I expected nothing more than a temporary gift of patience and oblivion of care. I was wrong, perhaps, in two respects. I depreciated too much the benefits of meditation. Of this I am already convinced. But I likewise miscalculated the value of those external means of improvement and pleasure with which even this condition is compatible. Of this I am not equally sure. The truth of it remains to be ascertained. In the transactions of human life, nothing equals the folly of despair. My experience has at least taught me thus much. Several times have I discovered that to be a most fortunate event, which before it arrived, and for some time after, I regarded as the most insupportable of all disasters. In a short time I may see reason to consider this in the same light. Independent of any exertion of mine, some lucky consequence from my imprisonment may arise, which may make me congratulate myself on the inflexibility of my creditor. But that desirable effect may be in some degree dependent on my own efforts. Let me survey for a moment the condition and furniture of this room.

*There* is a pine table, painted red. It is old and feeble; part of the scanty household of some wretch, which the pressure of necessity, or claim of a landlord has wrested from him. What pity that it cannot tell tales! Its testimony, if it had organs to perceive and to communicate, would fill volumes, and exhibit human nature in familiar and expressive attitudes. Kate, no doubt, purchased it with my money, at some constable's sale. It follows then that the table is my property. I gave the money with which she purchased this, and perhaps all the rest of the furniture of this apartment. *There* is a bed, and beside it a solitary chair. The most slender provision seems to include these three articles. He must be poor indeed who is obliged to dispense with them. And yet, in an absolute sense, all of them are luxuries. Sleep may be wholesome and sound without the protection of walls or roof. At least, table, bed, and chair are superfluities.

But *here* is a chest. By what accident was this placed here? It makes no part of necessary chamber furniture. This surely was not one of Kate's purchases. She had uses for a chest, but this room is occupied only by sub-tenants. I have not inquired who the last occupant was. She informed me merely that a considerable time had past since the last inhabitant eloped from it. He left her without paying her dues. Perhaps this part of his property was left by him, because the removal of it was inconvenient to his schemes. Her prudence must have prompted her to examine its contents, and convert them into money. It looks like a sailor's trunk, the bottom being larger than the lid. It promises but little, for what could a run-away sailor have left in his depository worth notice? But valuable or not, the undistinguishing Kate has rifled it. But this it would be absurd to leave to the mercy of conjecture. At the next visit of my good old woman I will make suitable inquiries of her, respecting this man and his trunk. Meanwhile why not step to the spot and examine it? Strange that this object never before attracted my attention. I have only to lift the lid in order to ascertain the question of its emptiness, or of the value of its contents.

It is locked. It will not be proper to break it open. I am not sure that my strength is equal to the task. A bolt is of little use if it cannot resist the force of an ordinary man. Suppose my curiosity would not suffer me to wait till the key is furnished. To employ violence on this occasion would be an unjustifiable procedure. It would argue a puerile degree of impatience. Might not Kate deem herself injured by it? In fact, the property contained in it may be hers. It may be filled with clothes, or with household utensils not in immediate use. It may be worth experiment to guess at its contents by its weight. It will be light if it be empty, and heavy, in different degrees, if it be full.

I cannot lift it. My utmost strength suffices not to move it from its place. This circumstance is of some moment. What can its contents be? It cannot be empty, and that which fills it must

be of a most extraordinary and ponderous nature. Of all substances, the heaviest are the metallic. Some implement of brass or iron may be inclosed in it; but a chest is a singular depository for iron or brass, in the quantity which its weight demonstrates to exist here. But there are other metals. A sanguine temper would easily decide, that the metal it contained was silver or gold. And where is the extravagance of that supposition? Here is promise of an adventure! Nothing less than English guineas, or Mexican dollars, compose its treasures. This indeed may prove a fortunate event; and yet depends upon the use that I make of the discovery. Money is power, and may be subservient to ill as well as to good. From the frailty of humanity, and the misarrangements of society, the injurious application of this instrument is always most probable.

If my conjecture be just, what a strange coincidence of events will be unfolded in this part of my life. To supply me with the means of discharging my debt, and restoring to a greater height than ever my fallen fortunes, my creditor had only to doom me to a prison, and compel me to seek a refuge in this obscure retreat. Here am I on the verge of poverty, and in danger of a gaol, yet thousands are within my reach. I confess I have some eagerness to ascertain this point. I wish my attendant would hasten her return. She is gone to market, to provide for dinner or supper.

But she will return. There is a moral certainty in that. She will readily, though in her circuitous way, impart all she knows. She will authorise me to break the lock, or will furnish me with the key. There is something in the very name of a chest that is mysterious and *meaning full*. Our curiosity is proportioned, among other circumstances, to the shortness of the interval, and the slightness of the bar between us and knowledge. What may be here concealed? A man may exhaust the whole catalogue of his conjectures, and yet be wrong. I have inferred great things from

the heaviness of this chest. I will make another effort to remove it—

So! ho! No wonder that to move it from its place was so difficult. It is nailed to the floor! What possible reason could there be for such a measure? Some strange properties must hang about it. There is nothing which helps me out in my conjectures. My whole life does not furnish me with one similar instance. Chests I have seen and examined on numberless occasions; and yet, except on shipboard, I never met with one fastened by nails to the floor. So then, what appeared so remarkably ponderous, may be perfectly empty! Its remaining in its present situation, notwithstanding the economy of Kate might have dictated differently, is, in some measure, accounted for. It is here, because it cannot be taken away.

But honest Kate, to my great satisfaction, has returned.

#### IV

#### THE MAN AT HOME.; No. IV.

[*Weekly Magazine* (Feb. 24, 1798)]

I HAVE talked with Kate upon the subject of this chest. Her information, as I expected, is not very satisfactory. When she first applied for this house it was untenanted. Its recent inhabitants had been destroyed by the reigning malady. The scanty furniture that was possessed by them, had been partly sold by the landlord for the payment of arrears. The rest, such as beds and clothes, had been buried or burnt, on account of the infection which they were supposed to have imbibed. The seeming worthlessness of this trunk, and the difficulty of removing it, had rescued it from the general wreck. In the terms which he made with Kate, the

landlord allowed her to act, with regard to this piece of furniture, as she thought proper.

She had hitherto forborne to meddle with it. Few women, perhaps, in her condition, would not have had some curiosity with respect to its contents. She, it seems, had none. Those who had occupied this room were as negligent, perhaps, as I had hitherto been, and it had thus, for four years, remained unmolested in the same spot. Here was an artificial receptacle of considerable dimensions. It might be filled with treasures of some kind. It had no owner. A slight exertion might raise the lid and put us in possession of all its contents. There was nothing criminal in this action, and it might produce consequences the most memorable to our happiness; yet, notwithstanding the restlessness and avarice of human beings, this action had not been performed.

But I cannot be certain of this. What should have hindered former tenants from examining and rifling it? The truth of this suggestion can be known only by searching it myself: Yet that is not an infallible means; for he that found it full might merely leave it empty. He might remove all that it contained, or all that was valuable, and be careful to leave behind no traces of the pillage. The secret of its contents may be locked in his own breast. This incident may have wrought the most entire change in his condition. The world may have witnessed the change, and employed its sagacity in conjecturing the cause. Some of those conjectures were, perhaps, so plausible, enforced by so many circumstantial concurrences, and countenanced, possibly, by the assent, tacit or expressed, of him who was the subject of conjecture, that those to whom they occurred, may finally embrace them as certainties: whereas the true cause of the revolution may exist in the circumstance that fixed his attention on this chest, and that suggested the design of examining it.

My train of reflections, on most subjects, are, I believe, singular. I have travelled very far. I have examined a great

number of objects, and conversed with men of almost all nations and every sort of character. I have sometimes asked myself what periods of my life are remembered by me with most complacency, and have been most fertile of knowledge; and I find, on tasking my memory, that my intellect was most enriched, and the impressions produced most numerous, beneficial, and lasting, during two stages in my mortal pilgrimage. The first endured six weeks, and was spent in the lazaretto of Naples. I was immured in a dark and noisome apartment, and condemned for the most part to absolute solitude, and the prey of a lingering disease, whose termination I firmly expected to be fatal. Yet here were founded and reared to maturity all the notions that I now hold most dear, respecting the rights and duties of men and the principles of social institution.

The second period lasted somewhat longer. When a merchant, my curiosity as well as interest, prompted me to act the supercargo with respect to my own property. On one occasion, my engagements carried me to the Isle of France. The return cargo I left to the care of the captain, and indulged a roving disposition in a way, perhaps, not very consistent with discretion. Seal skins are a valuable commodity at this place, purchasers being generally afforded by the ships that touch here. Three Frenchmen had formed an engagement to spend two years at the island of Amsterdam, a sterile and desolate spot, in the heart of the Indian seas, for the purpose of catching seals. A certain romantic adventuresomeness in my temper, induced me to join with them in this undertaking. I was weary of my solitude at the end of nine months, and took advantage of a British frigate which touched at the Isle, to make my escape. This period was fertile of instruction, by affording me occasions and topics of meditation.

My life has since been considerably uniform. The interruption to the smoothness of its tenor may be of ultimate advantage. I may see reason to count among the number of benefits, the fate that has consigned me to this prison. In the use

of my mental resources, I may improve my faculties, and add the most momentous truths to my stock. Something may likewise spring from this chest. I postpone the examination of it merely because there is a luxury in the meditations which it suggests, even in its present condition, which I am not disposed to abridge. I am prone, in this way, to make the most of every thing. Methinks, I could sit here, occasionally glancing at it, and find employment for years, for my mind and pen, in revolving and recording the ideas which it furnishes.

The world of conjecture is without limits. To speculate on the possible and the future, is no ineligible occupation. The invention is active to create, and the judgment busy in weighing and shaping its creations. Our own pleasure is promoted, for there is pleasure in the mere exercise, and the happiness of others is not neglected. Truths of the utmost moment may thus be struck out, and communicated to others. None of my faculties have been so much exercised as my invention, and I value myself on this circumstance, because it is the surest pledge of my own felicity and usefulness.

On this occasion I indulge myself in picturing a thousand dramas, in which the chief actor has been the tenant of this apartment, and the chief incident, that which has produced the disentanglement or catastrophe, has been the unclosing of this trunk. I have reviewed all the adverse conditions of human life, and all the prosperous occurrences, and imagined a certain connection between these and the rifling of this chest. I have at one time supposed its contents to be Portuguese gold, and at another conceived it to be filled with white sand. I have ransacked every corner of the world for a suitable inhabitant, and traced him, through all his variety of fortunes, to this spot. Here I have begun a new series, and introduced a total revolution in his character and fortune, by virtue of the treasures with which this trunk supplies him. My own observation has furnished me with

plenty of materials. I want neither the brick and mortar of the mason, nor the genius of the architect.

But though I indulge myself in forming endless conjectures on the history of this chest, I am desirous of obtaining all the truths respecting it which can be attained. I just now said that I have questioned my housekeeper, but that her information is by no means satisfactory. The little that she knows is gathered from the reports of others. She washes for the family of her landlord. On different occasions, she has collected some account of the character and destiny of the former tenants. I have suggested suitable enquiries, and prompted her curiosity on that head. Last evening she paid a gossiping visit to a neighbour, who staid in the city during the pestilence. She turned the discourse agreeably to my directions, and has just now been retailing to me all that she could glean.

This house, it seems, was occupied, in the summer of that year, by a Frenchman. He was aged and venerable, but infirm. His dress and demeanour were respectable. His mode of life was frugal almost to penuriousness, and his only companion was a daughter. The lady seemed not much less than thirty years of age; but was of a small and delicate frame. It was she that performed every household office. She brought water from the pump and provisions from the market. Their house had no visitants, and was almost always closed. Duly as the morning returned, the old gentleman was seen issuing from his door, dressed in the same style of tarnished splendour and old-fashioned preciseness. At the dinner hour he as regularly returned. For the rest of the day he was invisible.

The habitations in this quarter are few and scattered. The pestilence soon shewed itself here, and the flight of most of the inhabitants, augmented its desolateness and dreariness. For some time, De Moivre, that was his name, made his usual appearance in the morning. At length the neighbour, from whom Kate derived her information, remarked that he no longer came forth as usual.

Baxter had a notion that Frenchmen were exempt from this disease. He was, besides, deeply and rancorously prejudiced against that nation. I found no difficulty in accounting for this, when I came to know that he had been an English grenadier at Dettingen and Minden. It must likewise be added, that he was considerably timid, and had sickness in his own family. Hence it was that the disappearance of De Moivre excited in him no inquisitiveness as to the cause. He did not even mention this circumstance to others.

The lady was occasionally seen as usual in the street. There were always remarkable peculiarities in her behaviour. In the midst of grave and disconsolate looks, she never laid aside an air of solemn dignity. She seemed to shrink from the observation of others, and her eyes were always fixed upon the ground. One evening Baxter was passing the pump while she was drawing water. The sadness which her looks betokened, and a suspicion that her father might be sick, had a momentary effect upon his feelings. He stopped and asked how her father was. She paid a polite attention to his question, and said something in French. This and the embarrassment of her air, convinced him that his words were not understood. He said no more, (what indeed could he say?) but passed on.

Two or three days after this, on returning in the evening to his family, his wife expressed her surprise in not having seen Miss De Moivre in the street that day. She had not been at the pump, nor had gone, as usual, to market. This information gave him some disquiet; yet he could form no resolution. As to entering the house and offering his aid, if aid were needed, he had too much regard for his own safety, and too little for that of a frog-eating Frenchman, to think seriously of that expedient. His attention was speedily diverted by other objects, and De Moivre was, for the present, forgotten.

Baxter's profession was that of a porter. He was thrown out of employment by the present state of things. The solicitude

of the guardians of the city was exerted on this occasion, not only in opposing the progress of disease, and furnishing provisions to the destitute, but in the preservation of property. For this end the number of nightly watchmen was increased. Baxter entered himself in this service. From nine till twelve o'clock at night it was his province to occupy a certain post.

On this night he attended his post as usual. Twelve o'clock arrived, and he bent his steps homeward. It was necessary to pass by De Moivre's door. On approaching this house, the circumstance mentioned by his wife recurred to him. Something like compassion was conjured up in his heart by the figure of the lady, as he recollected to have lately seen it. It was obvious to conclude that sickness was the cause of her seclusion. The same, it might be, had confined her father. If this were true, how deplorable might be their present condition! Without food, without physician or friends, ignorant of the language of the country, and thence unable to communicate their wants or solicit succour; fugitives from their native country, neglected, solitary, and poor.

His heart was softened by these images. He stopped involuntarily when opposite their door. He looked up at the house. The shutters were closed, so that light, if it were within, was invisible. He stepped into the porch, and put his eye to the key-hole. All was darksome and waste. He listened and imagined that he heard the aspirations of grief. The sound was scarcely articulate, but had an electrical effect upon his feelings. He retired to his home full of mournful reflections.

He was willing to do something for the relief of the sufferers, but nothing could be done that night. Yet succour, if delayed till the morning, might be ineffectual. But how, when the morning came, should he proceed to effectuate his kind intentions? The guardians of the public welfare, at this crisis, were distributed into those who counselled and those who executed. A set of men, self-appointed to the generous office, employed

themselves in seeking out the destitute or sick, and imparting relief. With this arrangement Baxter was acquainted. He was resolved to carry tidings of what he had heard and seen to one of those persons early the next day.

## V

### THE MAN AT HOME.; No. V.

[*Weekly Magazine* (March 3, 1798)]

BAXTER, after taking some refreshment, retired to rest. In no long time, however, he was awakened by his wife, who desired him to notice a certain glimmering on the ceiling. It seemed the feeble and flitting ray of a distant and moving light, coming through the window. It did not proceed from the street, for the chamber was lighted from the side, and not from the front of the house. A lamp borne by a passenger, or the attendants of an hearse, could not be discovered in this situation. Besides, in the latter case, it would be accompanied by the sound of the vehicle, and, probably, by weeping and exclamations of despair. His employment, as the guardian of property, naturally suggested to him the idea of robbery. He started from his bed, and went to the window.

His house stood at the distance of about fifty paces from that of De Moivre. There was annexed to the latter, a small garden or yard, bounded by an high wooden fence. Baxter's window overlooked this space. Before he reached the window, the relative situation of the two habitations occurred to him. A conjecture was instantly formed that the glimmering proceeded from this quarter. His eye, therefore, was immediately fixed upon De Moivre's back door. It caught a glimpse of an human figure,

passing into the house, through this door. The person had a candle in his hand. This appeared by the light which streamed after him, and which was perceived, though faintly, through a small window of the dwelling, after the back door was closed.

The person disappeared too quickly to allow him to say whether it was male or female. This scrutiny confirmed, rather than weakened the apprehensions that first occurred. He reflected on the desolate and helpless condition of this family. The father might be sick; and what opposition could be made by the daughter to the stratagems or violence of midnight plunderers. This was an evil which it was his duty, in an extraordinary sense, to obviate. It is true, the hour of watching was passed, and this was not the district assigned to him; but Baxter was, on the whole, of a generous and intrepid spirit: In the present case, therefore, he did not hesitate long in forming his resolution. He seized an hanger that hung at his bed-side, and which had hewed many an Hungarian and French hussar to pieces. With this he descended to the street. He cautiously approached De Moivre's house. He listened at the door, but heard nothing. The lower apartment, as he discovered through the key-hole, was deserted and dark. These appearances could not be accounted for. He was, as yet, unwilling to call or to knock. He was solicitous to obtain some information by silent means, and without alarming the persons within, who, if they were robbers, might thus be put upon their guard, and enabled to escape. If none but the family were there, they would not understand his signals, and might impute the disturbance to the cause which he was desirous to obviate. What could he do? Must he patiently wait till some incident should happen to regulate his motions?

In this uncertainty, he bethought himself of going round to the back part of the dwelling, and watching the door which had been closed. An open space, filled with rubbish and weeds, adjoined the house and garden on one side. Hither he repaired,

and raising his head above the fence, at a point directly opposite the door, waited with considerable impatience for some token or signal, by which he might be directed in his choice of measures.

Human life abounds with mysterious appearances. A man, perched on a fence, at midnight, mute and motionless, and gazing at a dark and dreary dwelling, was an object calculated to rouse curiosity. When the muscular form, and rugged visage, scarred and furrowed into something like ferocity, were added; when the nature of the calamity, by which the city was dispeopled, was considered, the motives to plunder, and the insecurity of property, arising from the pressure of new wants on the poor, and the flight or disease of the rich, were attended to, an observer would be apt to admit fearful conjectures. An observer in the present case did exist, in whom the conduct of Baxter excited suspicions, and by whom, therefore, his proceedings were vigilantly noted. Who this observer was, and in what manner he demeaned himself on this occasion, will be hereafter mentioned.

I know not how long Baxter continued at this post. He remained here, because he could not, as he conceived, change it for a better. Before his patience was exhausted, his attention was called by a noise within the house. It proceeded from the lower room. The sound was that of steps, but this was accompanied with other inexplicable tokens. The kitchen door at length opened. The figure of Miss De Moivre, pale, emaciated, and haggard, presented itself. Within the door stood a candle. It was placed on a chair within sight, and its rays streamed directly against the face of Baxter, as it was reared above the top of the fence. This illumination, faint as it was, bestowed a certain air of wildness on features which nature, and the sanguinary habits of a soldier, had previously rendered, in an eminent degree, harsh and stern. He was not aware of the danger of discovery, in consequence of this position of the candle. His attention was, for

a few seconds, engrossed by the object before him. At length he chanced to notice another object.

At a few yards distance from the fence, and within it, some one appeared to have been digging. An opening was made in the ground, but it was shallow and irregular. The implement which seemed to have been used, was nothing more than a fire shovel, for one of these he observed lying near the spot. The lady had withdrawn from the door, though without closing it. He had leisure, therefore, to attend to this new circumstance, and to reflect upon the purpose for which this opening might have been designed.

Death is familiar to the apprehensions of a soldier. Baxter had assisted at the hasty interment of thousands, the victims of the sword or of pestilence. Whether it was because this theatre of human calamity was new to him, and death, in order to be viewed with his ancient unconcern, must be accompanied in the ancient manner, with halberts and tents, certain it is, that Baxter was irresolute and timid in every thing that respected the yellow fever. The circumstances of the time suggested that this was a grave, to which some victim of this disease was to be consigned. His teeth chattered when he reflected how near he might now be to the source of infection: yet his curiosity retained him at his post.

He fixed his eyes once more upon the door. In a short time the lady again appeared at it. She was in a stooping posture, and appeared to be dragging something along the floor. His blood ran cold at this spectacle. His fear instantly figured to itself a corpse, livid and contagious. Still he had no power to move. The lady's strength, enfeebled as it was by grief, and perhaps by the absence of nourishment, seemed scarcely adequate to the task which she had assigned herself.

Her burthen, whatever it was, was closely wrapt in a sheet. She drew it forward a few paces, then desisted, and seated herself on the ground, apparently to recruit her strength, and give vent to the agony of her thoughts in sighs. Her tears were either

exhausted or refused to flow, for none were shed by her. Presently she resumed her undertaking. Baxter's horror increased in proportion as she drew nearer to the spot where he stood, and yet it seemed as if some fascination had forbidden him to recede.

At length the burthen was drawn to the side of the opening in the earth. Here it seemed as if the mournful task was finished. She threw herself once more upon the earth. Her senses seemed for a time to have forsaken her. She sat buried in reverie, her eyes scarcely open and fixed upon the ground, and every feature set to the genuine expression of sorrow. Some disorder, occasioned by the circumstance of dragging, now took place in the vestment of what he had rightly predicted to be a dead body. The veil by accident was drawn aside, and exhibited, to the startled eye of Baxter, the pale and ghastly visage of the unhappy De Moivre.

This incident determined him. Every joint in his frame trembled, and he hastily withdrew from the fence. His first motion in doing this produced a noise by which the lady was alarmed: she suddenly threw her eyes upward, and gained a full view of Baxter's extraordinary countenance, just before it disappeared. She manifested her terror by a piercing shriek. Baxter did not stay to mark her subsequent conduct, to confirm or to dissipate her fears, but retired, in confusion, to his own house.

Hitherto his caution had availed him. He had carefully avoided all employments and places from which he imagined imminent danger was to be dreaded. Now, through his own inadvertency, he had rushed, as he believed, into the jaws of the pest. His senses had not been assailed by any noisome effluvia. This was no unpalatable ground for imagining that this death had some other cause than the yellow fever. This circumstance did not occur to Baxter. He had been told that Frenchmen were not susceptible of this contagion. He had hitherto believed this assertion, but now regarded it as having been fully confuted. He

forgot that Frenchmen were undoubtedly mortal, and that there was no impossibility in De Moivre's dying, even at this time, of a malady different from that which prevailed.

Before morning he began to feel very unpleasant symptoms. He related his late adventure to his wife. She endeavoured, by what arguments her slender ingenuity suggested, to quiet his apprehensions, but in vain. He hourly grew worse, and as soon as it was light dispatched his wife for a physician. On interrogating this messenger, the physician obtained information of last night's occurrences, and this being communicated to one of the dispensers of the public charity, they proceeded, early in the morning, to De Moivre's house. It was closed as usual. They knocked and called, but no one answered. They examined every avenue to the dwelling, but none of them were accessible. They passed into the garden, and observed on the spot marked out by Baxter, a heap of earth. A very slight exertion was sufficient to remove it and discover the body of the unfortunate exile beneath.

After unsuccessfully trying various expedients for entering the house, they deemed themselves authorised to break the door. They entered, ascended the staircase, and searched every apartment in the house, but no human being was discoverable. The furniture was wretched and scanty, but there was no proof that De Moivre had fallen a victim to the reigning disease. It was certain that the lady had disappeared. It was inconceivable whither she had gone.

Baxter suffered a long period of sickness. The prevailing malady appeared upon him in its severest form. His strength of constitution, and the careful attendance of his wife, rescued him from the grave. His case may be quoted as an example of the force of imagination. He had probably already received, through the medium of the air, or by contact of which he was not conscious, the seeds of this disease. They might perhaps have lain dormant, had not this panic occurred to endow them with activity.

This tale was partly new to me. I was previously acquainted with the destiny of Miss De Moivre, but knew not till now that this was the house she inhabited; that this was the scene of her last and greatest calamity. When compared with the disasters to which this woman was exposed, how trivial are the misfortunes which constitute the ordinary theme of complaint.

I was in some degree informed of Baxter's concern in this adventure. I knew not his name and the purpose that led him to watch this habitation. It now appeared that they who imputed to him illicit intentions, had treated him unjustly. The imputation was natural, perhaps unavoidable in the circumstances which suggested it. It was not immediately injurious to him. He had been an object of suspicion, but as such he was without a name. He whose attention had been attracted by the appearance and behaviour of Baxter, knew him not, and did not, on this occasion, view him so distinctly, as to be enabled, on any future encounter, to recognise him. The means by which this desolate girl gained an asylum and protector, are worth recording. They shew us the reasonableness of hope in the most forlorn condition, and the slender contingencies on which the momentous revolutions in human life depend.

## VI

### THE MAN AT HOME.

No. VI.

[*Weekly Magazine* (March 10, 1798)]

PAGES have been filled with ideas suggested by a broom-stick. I have a volume, under that title, in my possession. The writer follows the train of ideas suggested by the sight of this useful instrument, and is led by it on many an instructive and amusing

ramble. His speculations, indeed, are bound together by no other affinity than this. It is curious to observe what various and momentous themes take their rise in his understanding, from this humble source. He first discusses the nature of that principle, by which the sight of a broom-stick is made productive of a series of thoughts in the mind. In the course of this speculation he raises a scheme of his own on the ruins of that system which changes man into a pair of bag-pipes, and makes out the contexture of his body to be nothing more than a congeries of fiddle-strings. He endeavours to prove, that the hand is lifted and planets impelled by the same power, and that this power is thought. Having settled this point, he proceeds to describe the thoughts that spontaneously flow from the influence of this principle in his own, and in the present case.

He first comments on the properties of hickory in its inartificial state, and then on the economical uses to which it is applied, in the form of a broom. He next traces the history and laws of witchcraft, investigates the origin of the notion, that old women are the usual instruments of supernatural agency, that they perform their journeys, not on the ground, but through the air, and are mounted, not on griffins or phoenixes, but broom-sticks. He then launches out into a dissertation on superstition in general, and on the belief, so generally prevalent, that human affairs are constantly, or occasionally, influenced by invisible beings.

He then discourses on the uses of the broom-stick in poetry. He accounts for, and censures the fastidiousness of modern poets, by whom it is rejected; and shews, by pertinent quotations, that its importance was not overlooked by the Hebrew bards, who sometimes employ it under the more dignified, but antiquated, appellation of a *besom*. He reminds us, that Milton has not scrupled to introduce a *barber's puff* on the most solemn occasion. This poet has very gravely assured us, through the mouth of an angel, that the galaxy is nothing more

than a path in heaven "*powdered* with stars." If he had said, *sanded* with stars, it would, indeed, have been a more apposite illustration; but it cannot be denied that the broom-stick exceeds, both in usefulness and dignity, the powder-puff.

He then assumes the guise of a politician, and takes an ample view of society. He expatiates on maxims of social duty, by which each man is bound to contribute an equal portion to the common benefit. He shews that household cleanliness is matter of high moment: and that the task of whirling the mop is scarcely inferior in utility to that of guiding the plough. In a fit of patriotic and poetical enthusiasm, he calls upon his countrymen to "venerate the broom-stick." The book concludes with a moral and descriptive poem, in which the same use is made of a broom-stick, which a contemporary poet has made of a "Sofa."

This writer has emulated the author of "The Task," in the perfection of his poetry, but has far surpassed him in the justness of his reasoning. When this poem is published, I have no doubt but that it will become the standard of philosophy and taste. No doubt schools will be opened, and societies be founded, for the purpose of inculcating the doctrines of "The Broom-stick." A sect will arise, that will gradually comprise all the enlightened part of mankind, and its members shall assume the illustrious denomination of "Broom-sticks." The identical stick which gave birth to these sublime theories, shall be sought out and enshrined as a sacred relique. It shall be guarded with as much care as the *Casa Romuli* was in old Rome, or as the skull of St. Peter is in the modern one. So momentous a thing is a broom-stick.

What is more common than the fall of a leaf, especially in autumn? Yet hence arose the popular theory on the motions of the planets. The mode of estimating the specific gravity of substances was suggested by the ordinary circumstance of bathing in a tub. The science of chemistry received its birth, or at least its nurture, in the brain of alchymists, searching for the secret of making gold. Architects know how much they are indebted to so

familiar an occurrence as a basket left upon the ground, and covered with a square tile. If trifles like these may be the parents of such extensive consequences, why not regard an unopened chest with some degree of reverence?

Till now I had forgotten one fact which fell within my knowledge, and which proves that a chest, immoveable from its place, is not a very trivial subject. I will open the chest as soon as I have related the story.

In the village where I spent my youth a school-master resided, whose amusement sometimes consisted in practising impositions on the credulity and superstition of those around him. On many occasions he pretended to a magical power, and the imposture, with the connivance and assistance of another, was frequently successful. It happened that an inhabitant of the town was preparing to take a journey. It was evening, and a company was assembled at the house of the traveller. He was to set out early the next morning. Meanwhile the conversation turned upon the extraordinary powers which the school-master pretended to possess. Hitherto the traveller had been remarkably incredulous on this head. The instances of *wizardship* which were related, it had not been his fortune to witness. He denied his faith to them, therefore, not because, admitting the testimony of others to be valid, the event could be reconciled to natural laws, by certain allowable speculations on what was concealed, but merely because, in such extraordinary cases, he would believe only his own senses.

The subject being introduced, and the schoolmaster insisting, as usual, on the truth of his pretensions, the traveller expressed his contempt with very little ceremony. This treatment excited in the other a small degree of anger. He was too much master of his feelings to allow this to be seen, and merely expressed his willingness to put his talents to any proof which the other should propose. This challenge was accepted; but the traveller's invention was a meagre one, and could not suddenly

suggest any plausible experiment. This topic had fixed the attention of the company, and the general silence which expectation had produced, was at length broken by the pedagogue, who asked his friend if he did not mean to travel the next day? He was answered in the affirmative. Suppose, resumed the schoolmaster, I should forbid you to take this journey; and should prevent you, not by laying restraints upon your person, but by other means. His power to do this was denied, except in some natural and obvious way. The schoolmaster asked if he carried baggage with him, and of what kind? The other answered, that it was absolutely necessary to carry a wooden trunk behind his carriage. Where was the trunk? He refused an answer to this question. The other rejoined, that though he had made the enquiry, he stood in no need of more information than he possessed already; and that wherever the trunk was, since his companion had acknowledged that he could not go without it, there it should remain.

This menace was treated by his antagonist with ridicule. His arrangements for the next day's journey had been already made. His carriage and horse were at a neighbouring tavern. He was to rise before day; and therefore, to prevent any disturbance to his family, had resolved to lodge at the inn. Hither he had already carried his trunk, and deposited it in the chamber which he intended to occupy, and which he had locked, bringing the key away with him. Soon after this conversation he left the room, leaving the schoolmaster still engaged in conversation. He went to bed early, that he might rise betimes. On entering his room, he observed that his trunk appeared to have remained unmolested in the spot where he had placed it. He opened it, and found its contents in their proper order. He then went to bed, but was unable to sleep. Anticipations of the event of the next day's journey, and a certain lurking persuasion that the school-master's pretensions were not wholly groundless, kept him awake. He was aware that some attempt might possibly be made by the

schoolmaster to insure the success of his project. To counterwork these, he had locked the door, and was not unwilling to encourage the restlessness of his thoughts, in consequence of which sleep would be banished.

Whether this man was peculiarly liable to superstition, notwithstanding the boldness of his vaunts, or whether he was intimidated by the seeming indifference and sanguineness of the schoolmaster's assertions, he began more and more to imagine a necessity for vigilance. Much likewise depended upon the success of his projected journey. In the occasion of this journey, there was much to excite his fears and his impatience. A sentiment of shame induced him to conceal his purposes. His purpose was laudable, but in such a way that dishonour would arise from the disclosure of it, in as much as it was to repair an evil, caused by his own weakness. Though anxious to perform this journey, he was, at the same time, desirous of concealing his anxiety. For this end he laboured to exhibit an appearance of indifference, when his bosom was filled with the keenest inquietudes.

The trunk stood in a distant part of the room. The moonlight shone full upon it, and his eye was involuntarily directed to that quarter. It should seem that this would render him sufficiently secure. No one could approach the trunk without exciting his observation. But, in the present state of his mind, he was not willing to omit any practicable expedient. The trunk, he thought, would be less accessible if it were placed within his reach as he lay, or if it were thrust under the bed.

A resolution to this effect was speedily formed. He arose and went to the trunk. It was not heavy, and there was no difficulty, as he conceived, in executing his intention. Accordingly he made a slight effort to lift it from the floor. It was immovable. He made a second and more strenuous attempt, but with the same success. He was filled with amazement and trepidation, and continued to exert himself for some time, but still ineffectually. It may be supposed that the traveller's feelings,

during the remainder of the night were not very tranquil. He roused the landlady and the servants, and summoned the schoolmaster. The latter, after triumphing in this demonstration of his supernatural power, and being earnestly intreated to break the magic chains that held the trunk, proceeded to set-affairs on their ancient footing.

For this purpose he desired every one to retire from the chamber, while he himself remained. He continued alone in the room for twenty minutes. He then came forth, and informed the convert that his trunk was at liberty. On examination, this was found to be the case. The trunk was portable as formerly, though no conceivable alteration had taken place. Thenceforth the traveller was cured of his passion for invective and contempt upon this subject, and always justified his new faith by a relation of this story. This mystery, long after, I heard explained by the schoolmaster himself, in the following manner.

A pane of glass, in a window of this room, was broken. On the traveller's notifying the landlady of his intention to sleep in it on this occasion, she became extremely anxious to have it repaired. The customer was unapprised of this defect in the window, and she did not choose to hazard the loss of him, by informing him of the truth. She was, nevertheless, uneasy at the thought of exposing a valetudinary to the consequences that might arise from a broken pane in his bed-chamber. While reflecting on this subject, the schoolmaster entered, to whom she confided the secret of her uneasiness. He told her, that if she would purchase the glass, he would play the part of a glazer. This offer was thankfully accepted, the glass procured, and access gained to the room by means of a second key, which the good woman always kept in her possession. On their entering the apartment together, the new glazer noticed certain defects in the floor, to which the fastidiousness of her lodger might perhaps object, and which two or three large nails would easily repair. He

offered likewise to perform this service for her. The nails and implements were accordingly supplied him.

In the course of his labour, he noticed the trunk. The name of the proprietor was inscribed upon it. The talkative landlady minutely related the intentions of the traveller. Habit had rendered him expert in magical precautions and contrivances. On this subject he was always provident and heedful. The most casual incidents tended to suggest to his imagination schemes of this kind, and were rendered subservient to their success. Add to this, that a similar stratagem had formerly been executed by him. After some deliberation, he proceeded to unlock the trunk. He had purchased a lock and key after the same pattern with that which was affixed to this trunk, and at the same shop, for his own use. He next proceeded to drive three strong nails through the bottom of it to the floor. The contents of the trunk were then carefully replaced, and the lock refastened. The conversation of the evening was chiefly accidental, but converted by this skilful plotter to his own wonder-working purpose. When called upon to dissolve the spell, the trunk was opened by the same means, and the nails quietly withdrawn.

## VII

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS. *For the Weekly Magazine.*

THE MAN AT HOME.

No. VII.

[*Weekly Magazine* I.7 (March 17,1798)]

I AM disappointed, though the chagrin of disappointment has perhaps been justly incurred by me, since my expectations were set on irrational foundations. I have opened, and find—nothing! I will take, however, a child's vengeance on the cause of my

vexation. I will hew the chest to pieces, and convert the fragments into fuel. Henceforth it shall be my business to forget it.

True, said I to Miss De Moivre, when lately I had the honour of conversing with her, how a woman of your character and situation may most beneficially employ her time, is a question not easily solved. You have no family to superintend. If you had, the matter might easily be settled. In that case a variety of important occupations would present themselves. These, if you resembled the majority of females, would deserve to engross the whole of your time and attention; but, if they did not thus engross you, they would unfit you for employing your leisure in any mode foreign to, and incongenial with themselves.

You would then have one or two servants, and these are beings that require a perpetual guard to be kept against their indolence and roguery. Their ignorance too would most probably oblige you to be incessantly giving directions, and examining the manner in which your orders have been executed. Wherever they are, or however employed, you must be close at their heels. Servants are the great enemies of economy and order. These it would be your duty to maintain at all hazards. What painful and incessant efforts would this cost you.

You would not be rich enough to hire a steward or housekeeper. These offices you would be compelled to perform for yourself. You must purchase your utensils and provisions. The first is dispatched at a single effort. Of these, what you buy in a day will last you for years; but the second are consumed as soon as obtained, and require a ceaseless and periodical supply. Part of two days in the week must be allotted to this momentous purpose.

If you depute a servant, you must provide, by punctual attendance to his motions, against the chances of his forgetting or neglecting his duty. You must furnish him with money; and, in doing this, must not forget that it is his duty, as well as your own,

to pray that he may not be led into temptation. You must be careful to know the amount of what he receives, and to apprise him of your knowledge. On his return you must overlook his buyings, and scrutinise the prices; to do which last, presupposes some practical acquaintance with the subject. You must compel him to refund the surplus, and exert your numerical skill in bringing the account-current between him and you to a balance.

If he be a simpleton, and mistake an old hen for a pullet, or give more for a good thing than it is worth: If he misconstrue your orders, and procure beef when you wanted mutton, to what a world of pains will you be, in consequence, subjected? It is but equitable to correct, before we abandon an instrument. You must betake yourself to your fund of eloquence, and put his corrigibleness to a certain number of trials. If nothing will cure him of stupidity, you must needs dismiss him and procure a wiser. For this end you must enter into consultation with the gossips of your neighbourhood. You must set enquiries on foot, and sit in judgment on the qualifications and pretensions of applicants. Meanwhile, what another did for you, you must do for yourself. Victuals, you know, must be had, whether servants be stupid or sagacious.

But if, instead of being a dupe to others, he is himself a cheat, what is to be done? I need not mention the time spent in chewing the cud of vexation, and inventing means to detect the fraud. He is to be rated with a just indignation and discarded with disgrace, unless your duty to yourself and the community require that his conduct should be subjected to judicial scrutiny.

This is only one branch of the care that belongs to the victualling department. What is bought must pass through the hands of the cook. Not to mention the toil of procuring one sit for the office, and the attention due to her personal and moral deportment; there is a time, place, and manner in which provisions must be prepared for the table. In all these particulars it is your province to prescribe and to enforce the execution of

your orders. Three or four times a-day must the culinary processes be set on foot. The manner and moment in and at which these operations are to commence and to finish, must be expressly and repeatedly regulated.

In the next place, there are rooms and furniture to be kept in cleanliness and order. The mop and the scrubbing tools may demand to be used, perhaps, only once or twice a-week, but hands must be daily and eternally busy in demolishing the spider's woof; in restoring the lustre of steel, brass, and mahogany, and in removing the vile pollutions of dust. The hands thus employed may not be your own, but they must move at your direction; their performance must be accurately inspected, and the meed of censure or of praise be dispensed with punctilious equity.

What a field of care and of toil is opened upon you in the linen and woollen departments! A plentiful household must be supplied with cloth of every texture and form. These must be originally fashioned, if not by your own labour, yet according to your own taste, and in pursuance of your own directions. They must be repaired, and washing is an indispensable, and ceaseless, and most complicated process: But why need I dwell upon the multiplicity of domestic duties?

I have proceeded on the simplest supposition. I have described you as mistress of a family, but unincumbered with husband or children. I have described you in the enjoyment of mere comfort and sufficiency, and not of splendour and opulence. But, if these suppositions were adopted, the total devotion of your thoughts and time to the sustaining or alleviating the household burthen would be still more evidently necessary.

She must, indeed, be almost endowed with higher energies than human; be gifted with watchfulness and pliancy of mind beyond the ordinary reach of female capacity, who can snatch, from this ever-flowing tide, a few moments, and dedicate them to purposes purely social or intellectual. You, Madam, are

one of those extraordinary ordinary beings. Even in this situation there would, to you, be intervals of leisure created, not by negligence of any duty or task, but by the skilful discharge of the one, and the methodical distribution and swift performance of the other. You could bestow the full portion of thought that is claimed by any household office, and still reserve enough for converse and meditation. With the caprices and convenience of an husband to study, with the health and education of children to attend to, with a domestic economy to regulate, you would still procure intervals, and might justly ask, How may these intervals be most beneficially employed?

But this is not your situation. Your good friend treats you as a guest. You rise, and eat, and lie down without thought of the means by which every accommodation is supplied to you. Nothing but the procuring and disposing of your own dress, and those offices which are necessarily personal, are assigned to you. These, though they breathe the very soul of elegance and order, can scarcely be said to cost you any pains. The efforts they demand are sport to you, and not toil. You deck yourself with the speed, as well as the simplicity, of one of the graces. Every hour may be said to be a leisure one. You call upon me to provide employment for every day, and all your days. You assign to me an office equally delicate and arduous.

You are supported by the bounty of your friend, if that may be called bounty which has afforded you the permanent and unalienable means of subsistence. You have no money to spare to the wants and necessities of others. You place your felicity not wholly in the means of direct and personal pleasure. The benefit of others is of some weight in your scale. You desire to be happy, by making others so. What a question have you proposed! I will consider it, and give you an answer the next time we meet.

## VIII

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS. *For the Weekly Magazine.*  
THE MAN AT HOME.--No. VIII.

[*Weekly Magazine* (March 24, 1798)]

WELL, old as I am, I find I am reserved for an extraordinary fate. "Nil desperandum" was ever my motto; and yet, in the present case, I suffered appearances to snatch it from me. For a time, I thought my search was at an end—that the trunk was useless for any purpose but that of kindling a blaze. When black Will came to cut my wood, I desired my good woman to bring me up his axe for three minutes, and I proceeded to break up the chest. It is nothing, thought I, but useless lumber.

Lo! A cavity concealed! A false bottom! There is something deposited beneath. My impatience, as I drew forth the contents, made my heart falter and my fingers tremble. A manuscript! Written in my native tongue! Voluminous, and not illegible! This, surely, is a prize of value. Compared with it, gold and gems may be dross and pebbles. I must pause before I read. This adventure is so unexpected. Such inestimable secrets are capable of being comprised in a script so slender—

I have read. What a tale is here! No wonder that the historian was anxious for the preservation of the record. In spite of the pangs of fever, and the incoherence of delirium, he retained the consciousness of the value of this relique. He dropped the pen only when unable longer to guide it. By a vehement exertion, he employed the uncommon means of nailing his chest to the floor, of at once preserving and producing to the light these memorials of his existence. Had they perished, his name and his exploits would have descended to oblivion.

What event in the annals of human kind so memorable, as the disruption of Britain from her American colonies? How

worthy of the wise to investigate the causes that gave birth, and conducted, to a prosperous issue, that revolution! Hitherto, with regard to these particulars, mankind have been imperfectly enlightened. Who would have thought that there had died, in this chamber, an agent in this transaction, whose efforts had been signal and powerful? That in this dark cavity there had lain, so long neglected and unknown, ample and incontestible evidence of his agency?

I repeat that the tale is precious: It is without a parallel: This heroism was of a species so new, and so singular. To serve the cause of his country and of liberty by such means! To exercise so much forbearance, and suppress so long his claims to the homage of his countrymen. Ten years after that revolution was accomplished, he took up the pen with a view to assert these claims, by composing a relation of his actions. How unfortunate was he in selecting, for the performance of his task, a scene and a period so inauspicious.

He had scarcely finished, when the yellow fever made its appearance on him. His frame was of iron texture, and his mind was impregnable to fear; but this disease was an enemy too strong for him. Perhaps his defeat was owing to his rashness. He took no care to shun the haunts of this malady. When it seized him, he refused the aid of the physician. Scarcely had respiration ceased, when his corpse was crushed between four boards, dragged into a cart, and thrown, without solemnity or reverence, into the common receptacle. The form that was actuated by a soul of such gigantic energy, was confounded with the vulgar and "half-brutal mob."

I bless my fate, that has made this chamber my prison. Thus have these inestimable records been preserved. I will make myself the benefactor of my country, and of mankind, by effecting their publication. They cannot but be greedily and universally read. The tale has every claim to excite attention, and reward it. It will merit being ranked among historical monuments.

Its authenticity cannot well be denied. It unfolds the causes, and exhibits the true agents in a transaction of high importance in the American revolution. It has all the circumstantial and picturesque minuteness of a romance. With relation to the appendages of the scene, it is a sort of picture of the age at that period, and displays remarkable features in the condition of France, England, and America. With respect to the agents themselves, surely never was human nature depicted in lights equally grand and forcible!

I have now additional motives for desiring a speedy termination of my imprisonment. Yet perhaps this declaration is made too hastily. It will be requisite deliberately to review and arrange these papers. This could not, perhaps, be better done, than in a state exempted, as this is, from interruption, and secluded from noise.

## IX

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS. *For the Weekly Magazine.*  
THE MAN AT HOME.—No. IX.

[*Weekly Magazine* I.9 (March 31, 1798)]

MISS De Moivre did not fail to remind me of my promise when I next saw her. I repeated that the task which she assigned to me, was arduous. It was perhaps impossible to say what species of employment was most beneficial. Some might be mentioned from which unquestionable benefits would flow. It is worthy of a rational being to weigh with scrupulous exactness; to chuse that only which is intrinsically preferable. This, however, is your own province, not mine. I will point out one method, and state the recommendations that belong to it. Judge you whether it outgoes in excellence all others.

You are mistress of your pen. You have long ago familiarised yourself to the purest models. The petty graces, the flowery superficial genius which characterise most female writers, you hold in just disdain. You scorn to be a poet. You have visited the fountain of Vancluse, and have dipped into the very soul of St. Preux, but have escaped the voluptuous contagion. You aspire to the station of a moralist. The scope of your wishes is to free your own sex from servitude and folly. How shall this be done? By writing. But what shall you write? To make others wise, exhibit an example that is worthy of their imitation. In search of this example you need not go far. Sit down to the detailing of your own adventures, and the pourtraying of your own character.

Search as widely as you will; turn over all the annals of illustrious females; there is none in whom you shall find a rival to yourself. In the selection of the subjects of useful history, the chief point is not the virtue of a character. The prime regard is to be paid to the genius and force of mind that is displayed. Great energy employed in the promotion of vicious purposes, constitutes a very useful spectacle. Give me a tale of lofty crimes, rather than of honest folly. In this respect the history of your own country is not barren. What think you of Katherine of Medicis? Or to ascend somewhat higher, what think you of Joan D'Arc? When will that genius arise, that shall deserve to be the historian of that woman? The theatre on which she acted was magnificent and vast. What effects could flow from a woman's efforts, in that age of military heroism and barbarous grandeur, so sublime as were produced by this female? Subtlety in the investigation of causes, fertility in the invention, judgment in the arrangement, and eloquence in exhibiting the facts, would constitute a precious scene.

O! that my stars had made me a writer! All my accuracy and eloquence would I lavish upon this theme. I would collect all that is recorded of the expulsion of the English from France, on that occasion. My tale should be a complete, and, as far as

historical materials exist, a faithful narrative of that transaction; but every incident should occupy a subordinate place, and bear its due relation to the existence and exertions of that wonderful maid. I would call upon mankind to witness what a woman, in an age of aristocratical despotism and turbulent ignorance, unendowed with the prerogatives of birth and learning, was able to perform. This I would do, but you can do better.

You may descend, if you will, to more recent times. You may be the biographer of Madame Roland, or of Charlotte Cordee. This task would be worthy of your genius, if your own character did not exhibit the union of great talents and pure intentions. If you had not been engaged in scenes that exacted from you all the force which an human mind can possess: if you had not been a witness, and, in some respects, a performer in that great scene which now occupies the attention of the world.

To the lady's objections that her life had been uniform and distinguished by few momentous incidents, I answered by reminding her of her actual history, and a brief recapitulation of those incidents. These had been the topics of many previous conversations.

You were born, said I, at Cayenne. Your father was bewitched by a passion for botany. He spent his life plucking weeds, and embowelling sparrows among the Hottentots and Magalaches. This was fortunate. Hereby you were saved from that ruinous indulgence which you would have probably experienced from him, if you had lived together; for his temper was mild, and his capacity limited. Your mother's mind was flexible. She lived among negro slaves, and therefore became capricious and cruel. She extended her tyranny to you. Hence you were early inured to suffering and the exercise of fortitude. She was poisoned by a female slave when you were nine years old. The crime was for a long time undiscovered, and that slave accompanied you to Europe, whither you were immediately sent. The character of this slave, capable of avenging a contemptuous

word by so black a crime as murder; capable of hiding it so long, and of such signal fidelity to you, is a scene which a genius like yours would depict in its true colours. Your mind is fraught with instructive facts and profound reflections on the topic of negro servitude. What admirable details, on the state of colonial manners, have I heard from you!

Thus early you were vested with independence. Your prejudices were precluded by long and familiar converse with different nations. The subsequent four years were spent at Padova. Here you gained a proficiency in music, and the arts in which the Italians excel. Your organs were flexible and your fancy luxuriant. Hence Tuscan accents and Tuscan poetry were incorporated with your very essence.

Here you were placed under the superintendence of Signora Ruspini, your father's cousin. A period of four years, even at so early an age, furnished your mind with incidents and reflections, of which you would now make admirable use. No extraordinary adventures befel you; but the habits of your protectress, brought you to a nearer acquaintance with the scene around you, than most others enjoyed. Besides, you were a foreigner, a Frenchwoman, of a rank exempting you from a nice regard to forms, and enjoying affluence. This was a tranquil period; but the next was arduous and turbulent.

You had a kinswoman at Paris, rich, vain, noble, and voluptuous. You were, at the blooming age of fourteen, accomplished, beautiful, and opulent. The Countess promised you to a young man, whom you could not be prevailed on to accept. Plots were laid against your virtue; the rectitude of your mind was assailed from a thousand quarters; you were exposed to all the fascinations of vanity and luxury; you were enticed into the train of Marie Antoinette, and immersed in the intrigues of the court and the cabinet; you were forcibly involved in the motley circles of Paris, mingling politics and love, philosophy and gallantry, superstition and scepticism; you can relate the dawning

of the French alliance with the revolted colonies of England; the steps that were taken, the plans that were laid in the closet of the queen: you were young in years, but mature in understanding.

Your persecutors having exhausted pacific means, resorted to falsehood and constraint. Your struggle was arduous. You were without friends. Your father was hunting ostriches in Angola. You had been taught to believe that he was dead. Your fortune was withheld from you by unjust guardians. Your peace, and virtue, and liberty, were preparing to be made the victims of detestable treachery. Your sole security lay in flight. Such were the perils that surrounded you, that no part of France could afford you refuge. The avenues to Italy were shut against you. The sea-ports were closed, and entrance into England denied you. A desponding view was cast upon the Netherlands and Germany. What a story would be yours, were you to record the arts that were practised against you; the means you employed to escape; the obstacles which you encountered, from an exhausted purse, ignorance of the German language, and ferocity of peasants, revenue officers, and soldiers; should you dwell upon the virtues of your faithful Laurote, and the vicissitudes of fortune that pursued you to the suburbs of Leipsic. These adventures befell you before your sixteenth year. When others were scarcely emerged from their infancy, you had acquired the fruits of long and various experience. You had inspected man in every gradation of rank. You had viewed the world with your own eyes. You were governed by the genuine motives to activity and fortitude. You were magnanimous because you were ignorant of nothing that pertained to your condition.

Soon after your elopement, your father arrived in Paris in search of you. Your fame was at the mercy of your enemies. He was enlisted among the number, and deceived into concurrence with those who aimed at your destruction. You were discovered in your retreat. You were compelled to exert the most strenuous courage and dexterity to elude the fate that was menaced you, of

being carried into Hungary, that being the native country of the man who sought you for his wife.

You resolved to supplicate the protection of the elector. For this end you hastened to Dresden. This protection was denied to you, and you only rushed into new perils; from which you were extricated by the wife of the English resident. Her protection was rendered efficacious by her speedy departure to England. In her company you arrived in London, and spent the subsequent year in the bosom of tranquillity.

At the conclusion of the war, in 1783, your father's botanical pursuits led him into England. He was one of the most celebrated votaries of this science. Affinity of taste introduced him to the husband of your patroness. At his house an unexpected interview took place between you, in consequence of which, mistakes were rectified, and you were restored, after a separation of twelve years, to the arms of an affectionate father.

Your father's life was wandering and unsettled. He therefore complied with the request of Mrs. Ilchester, that you should continue to reside with her. This lady possessed extraordinary qualities, which made her worthy of your reverence, and was without children. The scheme therefore obtained your cheerful concurrence.

In a short time Mr. Ilchester was appointed ambassador to Sweden. Hither you and his lady accompanied him. You spent eighteen months at Stockholm; a period not neglected or misemployed by you. Contrary to the customs of your sex, you applied yourself with zeal to historical and political studies, and gained an accurate acquaintance with the present state of Europe. You contemplated the economy of the nation, among whom you resided, with a watchful and judicious eye. You made considerable progress in the language; and your curiosity carried you to the hills of Dalcarl, and the wilds of Finland. Your trials, however, were not at an end; and this peaceful life was destined to yield to new scenes of trouble and uncertainty.

Mr. Ilchester, with many virtues, united some egregious errors. Among the chief of these, was to be numbered an habitual unfaithfulness to his amiable and deserving lady. It was peculiarly unfortunate that you should become the object of his illicit addresses. This man was not easily repulsed, and he at length subjected you to the mournful necessity of searching out a new abode.

Your father was, at this time, prosecuting his botanical researches in the western part of the United States. After two years thus employed, he had planned to return to a large estate that he had bought in St. Domingo. Unless your purpose had been changed by marriage, it had been concerted that, on receiving information of his arrival in that island, you should hasten to meet him.

Six months were yet to elapse before the arrival of this period. You were compelled to the immediate desertion of your present home. You embarked in an American ship that chanced to lay at the nearest sea-port; and, after a perilous and tedious navigation, arrived at New-York. You could procure no information of your father. You passed to Philadelphia and Baltimore, in the imperfect hope of meeting, or procuring tidings of him. At London he had embarked for America, but since that period had not apprized you of his destiny. Your money was exhausted, but your good fortune saved you from distress, by introducing you to a wealthy countryman, who lived at the latter place as a merchant. He had some knowledge of your family, and gratuitously supplied you with money to execute a design that you had now conceived. You determined to return to Signiora Ruspini, the only person on earth whom you could call your friend. You were, at the same time, informed of the death of your perfidious kinswoman. This circumstance facilitated the performance of your project. The merchant, who formerly dealt with your father for the produce of his lands at Cayenne, dwelt in L'Orient. He might possibly possess some information respecting

him. This influenced you in chusing to embark at Baltimore for this port.

Immediately on your arrival, you went to his house, and was informed by him that your father had taken up his residence at St. Domingo; that he had repeatedly addressed letters to you, on the belief that you still resided in the family of Ilchester. Here you remained for some time, and in this city you completed the twentieth year of your age.

Such were the adventures of your youth. In their variety and danger, surely there are few who can pretend to rival you. Can a narrative of these, written with an eloquence with which you are so richly endowed, accompanied with that lustre of description and profoundness of reflection, for which you are so eminent, fail of exciting curiosity? Can it fail of imparting, to your female readers, the most valuable instruction?

You are ignorant of English. I cannot applaud your aversion to this language. Since nine years disuse of it has wholly effaced it from your memory, your original acquisitions must have been extremely limited. This is of little moment. Address yourself to your countrymen in your native tongue. Saddle your friend here with the task of translation. No doubt, he will willingly assume the office. But if the incidents of your youth be trivial, and unworthy of being recorded, surely the same cannot be asserted of the events that have since befallen you.

## X

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS. *For the Weekly Magazine.*  
THE MAN AT HOME.—No. X.

[*Weekly Magazine* (April 7, 1798)]

THE second period of Miss De Moivre's life was still more worthy to be exhibited. She was now become a woman, and was preparing to return to her father, when a letter from him informed her of a change in his plans. He was considerably capricious, and had roamed about so much, that he found it impossible to remain long in one place. Add to this, a sudden scheme that occurred to him of exploring the southern side of mount Jura, as a botanist. Every thing must yield to the gratification of his darling passion. He immediately resolved to sell his property in St. Domingo and return to France, and of this, timely information was received by his daughter.

She resided with her father's friend at Bourdeaux, till a singular occasion required her presence at Paris. Here she remained till the revolution broke forth; of the steps preparatory and tending to which, herself and her intimate associates were fully apprised. Her father, though little qualified for so arduous an office, was named a deputy from one of the southern departments. He sided with the enemies of royalty, but eluded, by timely flight, to America, the storm that burst upon the head of the Rolandists. His estate was destroyed by the insurrections of St. Domingo, and he arrived at Philadelphia with no funds to support him beyond the year. The utmost frugality in the management of this fund was necessary. He hired the house which is now my prison; and here he perished, a victim to disappointment and vexation.

I have a young friend whose character well deserves to be pourtrayed. During the autumn of 1793, he remained in this city,

performing acts of heroic benevolence in secret and unseen. He chanced to be passing this house, on the very night of De Moivre's death. The conduct of Baxter, who was lurking in the shade of it, excited his suspicions. He thought proper to screen himself from notice behind a corner, and watch the motions of this man. He traced him to the back of the house, and placed himself where he could observe every thing that passed. The conduct of the lady arrested his attention, but did not excite his fears. Baxter's precipitate flight confirmed him in the belief that his views had been illicit. He witnessed the terror of the lady, and saw her retire into the house, after she had finished the interment.

What was to be done? The nature of this distress was evident. The lady was helpless and solitary. Never was succour more needed. His resolution was easily taken; but he could not so easily ascertain the suitable means. Yet the thought of leaving her forlorn till the morning was insupportable. An irresistible impulse carried him forward, and he went to the door of the kitchen. The lady had not fastened it. He entered, but with cautious steps. He was afraid of alarming her by noisy signals.

He crept to the foot of the stairs. There was surely impropriety in thus clandestinely intruding on her retirements; yet what other mode could be pursued? He could not consent to withdraw: The consolation and aid which he meant to offer ought not to be, for a moment, withholden. If suffered to pass this night in her present desolate condition, to what agonies of hopelessness and grief might she not be condemned?

The stair-case terminated in a door. He approached it unheard. The light within directed him to a crevice on one side. Here he was able to discover the interior of this apartment; of the very room which I now inhabit! The aspect of every thing was bare and wretched. On one side stood a bed, from which the corpse of De Moivre had been just removed. Opposite to this stood a table. A candle nearly expired was placed upon it. Beside

it sat the lady, in a thoughtful attitude, resting her elbow on the table. Her posture and the position of the light, afforded him a full view of her countenance. It operated on his feelings like an angelic vision.

The pencil only can describe the expression of her features. He expected to behold her blinded by tears and exanimated by grief; but no, her brow was serene. Her eyes were down-cast, and her features bespoke nothing but a state of solemn meditation and collectedness. My friend was placed in a delicate predicament. The reasons for advancing or receding were nearly balanced. He deliberated; but the more attention he paid to the subject, the more his uncertainty increased. Perhaps he would have finally determined to retire, and to postpone an interview till the morning, had not a casual noise attracted the lady's notice. She rose from her seat, and gazed at the door with a listening air. My friend, no longer able to forbear, lifted the latch, slowly opened the door, and entered. The lady was not over powered by surprise, but hastily opening a drawer in the table, armed herself with a pistol.

No appearance was less calculated to inspire terror than that which she now beheld. Intrepidity and gentleness were remarkably blended in the countenance of my friend. His figure was adorned with all the charms of youth and all the attractions of benevolence. He apologised in her own language for this intrusion, and explained in the most winning terms, his motives for this behaviour. His words speedily quieted her apprehensions, and he proceeded to tender his assistance to render her present residence commodious, or to place her in a more secure asylum.

I shall not attempt to describe the scene that followed. It is only her own pen that can do it adequate justice.

She insisted, for the present, on his absence, but was prevailed upon, with great difficulty, to consent to his returning early in the morning. She then permitted him to introduce her to the lady at whose house she now resides.

At that time Mrs. D..... resided a few miles from the city. She was roused from her sleep by my friend, in a short time after he had parted with Miss De Moivre. These incidents were related, and her consent to afford this unfortunate lady a temporary asylum was easily obtained. He equipped her chaise, and arrived at the dawn of day at the door of this habitation, and in four hours after their first interview, the lady found herself in the arms, and under the protection, of Mrs. D..... from whom she has since experienced nothing but maternal treatment.

I do not despair of one day seeing her the wife of my young friend. Their sympathy of views and character, can scarcely fail of accomplishing their nuptial union. Meanwhile the obstacles to be surmounted are not few. An interval must, necessarily, elapse, which surely cannot be more profitably or delightfully employed by her than in composing the history of her own adventures.

## XI

*For the Weekly Magazine.*

THE MAN AT HOME.—No. XI.

[*Weekly Magazine* (April 14, 1798)]

WHAT a series of calamities is the thread of human existence? I have heard of men who, though free themselves from any uncommon distress, were driven to suicide by reflecting on the misery of others. They employed their imagination in running over the catalogue of human woes, and were so affected by the spectacle, that they willingly resorted to death to shut it from their view. No doubt their minds were constituted after a singular manner. We are generally prone, when objects chance to present

to us their gloomy side, to change their position, till we hit upon the brightest of its aspects.

I was lately perusing, in company with my friends Harrington and Wallace, the history of intestine commotions, in one of the ancient republics. It was one of the colonies of Magna Græcia. The nation comprehended a commercial city, peopled by eighty thousand persons, with a small territory annexed. Two factions were for a long time contending for the sovereignty. On one occasion, the party that had hitherto been undermost, obtained the upper place. The maxims by which they intended to deport themselves were, for some time, unknown. That they would revenge themselves upon their adversaries, in any signal or atrocious way, was, by no means, expected. Time, however, soon unfolded their characters and views.

The annalist proceeds to describe the subsequent events with great exactness of time, place, and number; but exhibits none of those general views which fill the reader's imagination, and translate him to the scene of action. His details, however, are, on that account, the more valuable, since the dullest reader, when possessed of these materials, will stand in no need of foreign aid to *circumstantialize* the picture.

The ordinary course and instruments of judicature were esteemed inadequate to their purposes. These would not allow them to select their victims, in sufficient numbers, and with sufficient dispatch. They therefore erected a secret tribunal, and formed a band of three hundred persons, who should execute, implicitly, the decrees of this tribunal. These judges were charged with the punishment of those who had been guilty of crimes against the state. They set themselves to the vigorous performance of their office.

On other occasions it has been usual to subject to some appearance of trial, the objects of persecution; to furnish them with an intelligible statement of their offence; to summon them to an audience of their judges; and to found their sentence on

some evidence real or pretended; but these rulers were actuated by no other impulse than vengeance. The members of this tribunal were convened, daily, for no other purpose than to form a catalogue of those who should be forthwith sacrificed.

The avenues to the hall where they assembled were guarded by the troop before mentioned. Having executed the business of the day, the officers of this band of executioners were summoned, and the fatal list was put into their hands. The work of death began at night-fall. This season was adopted to render their proceedings more terrible. For this end, likewise, it was ordered that no warning should be given to the men whose names were inscribed upon this roll, but by the arrival of the messengers at their door.

These, dressed in peculiar uniform, marched by night to the sound of harsh and lamentable music, through the streets of the mute and affrighted city. They stopped at the appointed door, and admission being gained, peaceably or by violence, they proceeded, in silence, to the performance of their commission. The bow-string was displayed; the victim torn from his bed, from the arms of his wife, from the embraces of his children, was strangled in an instant; and the breathless corpse, left upon the spot where it had fallen. They retired, without any interruption to their silence, and ended not their circuit till the catalogue was finished.

To inflict punishment was the intention of these judges, but they considered that our own death is not, in all instances, the greatest evil that we can suffer. We would sometimes willingly purchase the safety of others at the price of our own existence. The tribunal therefore conducted itself by a knowledge of the characters of those whom its malice had selected. Sometimes the criminal remained untouched, but he was compelled to witness the destruction of some of his family. Sometimes his wife, sometimes his children were strangled before his eyes.

Sometimes, after witnessing the agonies of all that he loved, the sentence was executed on himself.

The nature of this calamity was adapted to inspire the utmost terror. No one was apprized of his fate. The list was inscrutable to every eye but that of the tribunal. The adherents to the ruling faction composed about one third of the inhabitants. These of course were secure. If they did not triumph in the confusion of their foes, they regarded it with unconcern.

The rage and despair which accompanied the midnight progress of the executioners, scarcely excited their attention. Their revels and their mirth suffered no interruption or abatement.

It was asked in vain, by the sufferers, when the power which thus scattered death and dismay was to end. No answer was returned. They were left to form their judgment on the events that arose. Night succeeded night; but the murders, instead of lessening, increased in number. Many admitted the persuasion that a total extermination of the fallen party was intended. For a considerable period every circumstance contributed to heighten this persuasion. It was observed that the list continued gradually to swell, till the number of executions in a single night amounted to no less than two hundred.

It were worthy of some eloquent pen to describe this state of things. Surely never did the depravity of human passions more conspicuously display itself than on this stage. The most vigorous efforts were made to shake off this dreadful yoke, but the tyrants had previously armed their adherents, and guarded every avenue to a revolution, with the utmost care. The city-walls and gates served to stop the fugitives, and none but the members of the triumphant faction were suffered to go out. Policy required that those who furnished the city with provisions should be unmolested in their entrances and exits. In no variation of circumstances, indeed, had the wretched helots any thing to fear. No change in their condition could possibly be for the worse.

It will hardly be believed that this state of things continued for so long a period as four months. During this time vengeance did not pause for a single night. At the expiration of this period, suddenly, and without warning, the nightly visitations ceased, and the tribunal was dissolved. The world were permitted to discover what limits had been assigned to the destruction. On counting up the slain, it appeared that six thousand persons had perished, and, consequently, that the purpose of the tyrants had been, not the indiscriminate massacre, but, merely the decimation of their adversaries.

Having finished the perusal of this tale, I could not forbear expatiating to my friends on the enormity of these evils, and thanking the destiny that had reserved us for a milder system of manners—"Not so fast," said Harrington. "You forget that the very city of which we are inhabitants, no longer ago than 1793, suffered evils, considerably parallel to those that are here described. In some respects the resemblance is manifest and exact. In the inscrutableness of the causes that produced death; the duration of the calamity; and the proportional number of the slain, the cases are parallel. Our condition was worse inasmuch as the lingerings and agonies of fever are worse than the expeditious operation of the bow-string. We had to encounter the miseries of neglect and want. The cessation of all lucrative business, and the sealing up of most of the sources of subsistence, were disadvantages peculiar to ourselves. Against these may be put in the balance the misery which haunts the oppressors, and those aggravations of distress flowing from a knowledge that the authors of our calamities are men like ourselves, whom, perhaps, our own folly, has armed against us. The evils which infest human society flow either from causes beyond our power to scrutinize, or from the licence of malignant passions. It would require a delicate hand to adjust truly the balance between these opposite kinds of evil. Suppose tyranny and plague, as in these cases, to destroy the same numbers in the same time, which has

produced the greatest quantity of suffering? It is not easy to decide, but I am apt to think that the miseries of plague must be allowed to preponderate."

"The cases," said Wallace, "seem to me to have very little resemblance. If I had been an inhabitant of the Greek colony, I see now how I should have been benefited by this state of affairs, whereas the Yellow Fever was, to me, the most fortunate event that could have happened. I kept a store, as you know, in Water Street. I am young, and was then so poor that my stock, small as it was, was obtained upon credit. I was obliged to exert the most unremitting industry to procure myself the means of living, and the very means, by which I sought to live, had like to have destroyed me. My frail constitution could not support the inconveniences of inactivity and bad air. My health was rapidly declining, and I could not afford to relinquish my business. The Yellow Fever, however, compelled me to relinquish it for a while.

"I took cheap lodgings in the neighbourhood of Lancaster. Country air and exercises completely reinstated me in the possession of health, but this was not all, for I formed an acquaintance with a young lady, who added three hundred pounds a year, to youth, beauty, and virtue. This acquaintance soon ripened into love, and now you see me one of the happiest of men. A lovely wife, a plentiful fortune, health, and leisure are the ingredients of my present lot, and for all these am I indebted to the Yellow Fever."

## XII

*For the Weekly Magazine.*

THE MAN AT HOME.—No. XII.

[*Weekly Magazine* (April 21, 1798)]

IT is amusing to remark in what various points of view the passion of love has been considered. I was lately perusing an author<sup>1</sup>, whose theory had more novelty and wore an air of greater paradox than I have hitherto met with. He is a physician who makes a threefold classification of diseases. The two first classes are fashioned on a new, but on no fantastical model. If there be any truth in the customary distinctions, *these* are sufficiently within the province of the medical art. Many of the articles that constitute the third class have hitherto been assigned to the moralist. This writer, however, very gravely arranges them in his catalogue, annexes a technical description, and prescribes the "modus medendi."

Love then is a disease? This assertion would, in most cases, induce laughter, an affection which this writer has likewise denominated a disease. I am not qualified to judge of the accuracy of this arrangement. With a certain licence of speech there seems, even to the unlearned, no great impropriety in this appellation. The will is necessarily guided and directed by opinion. Opinions may be erroneous or they may be conformable to truth. The influence of erroneous opinions on the will, may, in a popular or loose sense, be termed a *morbid* influence; but the disease in this case seems to adhere to the opinion, and not to the will. Wrong opinions originate in various circumstances; but the will, when correct, acts in exact agreement with the opinion, be it wrong or right. Whatever be the deductions of science, therefore,

it seems, in a popular view, absurd to talk of love, ambition, pride of birth, and the like, as diseases of volition. They are maladies of the understanding; of that faculty which compares, and not of that which operates with genuine force and in an healthful manner, when it operates in conformity with our opinions.

According to this new mode of considering the subject, the world may, at present, be regarded as one vast hospital. Some men may be infected with a complication of diseases, but there is no who is wholly uninfected. Even physicians themselves, are far from enjoying an exemption. They, as well as the wretch who is tortured with gout or rheumatism are distempered, but in a slighter degree or in a different manner.

There is one disease in this catalogue, which betides every animal without exception. Nay, it has sometimes been supposed to extend to the vegetable tribes. It recurs periodically, and with a perseverance truly wonderful. Great mental exertions may ward off its approaches for two or three successive days, but, in general it visits us at least once in twenty-four hours. The duration of the fits is less uniform than the periods of their recurrence. In some cases they last twelve hours, in others, but more rarely, only four or six.

No disease can be conceived more terrible than this. Not to mention the incessant return of the fits and their duration, which swallows up one half or one third of our lives; the symptoms that attend it are peculiarly deplorable. Our thoughts are at a stand; or, if they proceed, they are full of deformity and incongruity. The inlets to knowledge are shut up. We are blind; not from any material defect in the organ, but from the loss of all power to raise our eye-lids. We can smell, hear, feel, taste nothing. We are bereaved of all power over our loco-motive muscles. The joints are powerless and relaxed, and we inevitably sink into a supine or recumbent posture.

During the paroxysms there is an absolute cessation of all pleasure, whether of sensation or reflection. We are able neither

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<sup>1</sup> Darwin's Zoonomia. Eratomania.

to ruminate on the past, contemplate the present, nor anticipate the future. We are insensible to all around us. The very consciousness of existence is suspended. We are deprived of all that distinguishes us from stocks or stones. The faculty that assures us of our being undergoes a temporary annihilation.

Pain and grief as well as pleasure and joy, depending for their existence on the operation of the mind and of the organs of sense, are of course equally excluded during the paroxysms of this disease. If the mournful condition of human beings were capable of exaggeration, no one circumstance would reflect a more ghastly hue upon it than this, that our agonies of mind and body frequently arise to such a pitch, that we seek relief in this temporary extinction of our consciousness. Nay, it is frequently a topic of congratulation that this miserable refuge is afforded us. There are certain artificial means by which the fits may be invited and prolonged. However incredible it might seem to creatures less imperfectly constituted, these means have, on numberless occasions, been employed. Death has been imagined by some to be a similar state of unconsciousness, differing only in duration. Sufferings of one degree will recommend a state of temporary non-existence. Sufferings more intense have often impelled men to embrace what they conceived to be a state of absolute and endless non-existence.

The recurrence of these paroxysms is likewise necessary to prevent death. We must forego our consciousness for a while that we may not lose it altogether; or at least, that we may not lose the possession of it in our present form and with our present organs. In order to preserve our minds in a tolerably sound and active state during the intervals, it is requisite that these paroxysms should be regular and complete. This undoubtedly is true in the present state of the human frame. Thus much may be said of it, that injurious and inconvenient as it is, it excludes something that is worse.

No community of men in any age, of which history has preserved the memory, have been exempt from this malady. Hence it is generally supposed to be interwoven with the very constitution of a human being, and that men can no more hope to enjoy exemption from it than to increase the number of their eyes or legs. This opinion has not been without opponents. Some have not only asserted this affection to be a *morbid* one, but have even ventured to insinuate that it is curable. The annals of medicine have furnished some instances of exemption from this malady. Numerous individuals, in every community, have escaped the other diseases in this catalogue. We meet with men whose reason is absolutely cloudless, whose appetites and passions never transgress the limits of wisdom, and whose desires are unalterably centered in that which is truly good; but the cases are indeed rare, so rare that human history does not furnish more than two examples of men who were never visited by the more pernicious malady—*Sleep*.

The same observation may be made of love as of sleep. They are equally diseases, that is, they are equally deviations from the truth of things and the perfection of our nature; but they are diseases whose tendency it is to exclude diseases still greater.

To call love a disease is to impute it to some error or defect. This defect is of a moral nature. It is evil in itself and not good. It is, in the sources whence it springs, not a virtue but a vice. Mankind will be apt to be startled at this mode of considering the passions. That will not be readily esteemed criminal which all mankind, green or grey, foolish or wise, metaphysicians or poets, have combined to worship as the cement of society, the mother of humanizing arts, and the fosterer of social duties.

They will agree with this theorist in one thing. They will agree that this passion, laudable and even necessary as it is, may be carried to a morbid excess. Cases may be easily quoted in

which love is the ruling passion, and in which it cannot be denied to be a dangerous disease.

A friend of mine lost his wife, after living ten years with her. Happily he had no children or rather perhaps this was a want to be regretted. Filial regards might have precluded the consequences that took place. He shut himself up in that which had been their common chamber. He hung her picture against the wall. He disposed various trinkets and parts of dress which had belonged to her, in places where they continually solicited his notice. His whole time was employed in ruminating on his loss. He never left the apartment longer than ten minutes at a time. He denied himself to all visitants. His body was emaciated by grief, and this state of things terminated, at the end of three years, in his death.

Henry Fairfax was my school-fellow. At the age of eighteen he became enamoured of a girl, to whom he was clandestinely married. One week after their nuptials they parted, the lady being obliged to return home. Her home was some hundreds of miles distant. She had previously imbibed the variolus contagion. Half the journey was performed when the small pox appeared upon her, and in three days hurried her to the grave. Her companion and attendants were unacquainted with the interest which Fairfax possessed in her life. An interval of excruciating doubt befel the lover. Accident at length apprized him of her fate. His disease suddenly mounted to a crisis. He sought out her grave, and shot himself at the foot of it.

Poor Harry! I am sorry that thy aim was ineffectual. Thou didst not destroy thy life, but thy intellects were irreparably wounded. Many years hast thou occupied a cell in an hospital. Squalid, naked, and emaciated—what a monument of ruin and of rashness dost thou exhibit! Once a month I used to visit thy drear abode. All traces of the past, the images of kinsmen and of friends, are long since effaced from thy memory. I visit thee to

con over the most instructive lesson that ever was afforded me, on the evil of unbridled passion.

Walter Wemys was contracted to a woman of a neighbouring county. Never was there so fond a pair. Three months before the day fixed for their nuptials, his affairs compelled him to make a long journey. His absence was prolonged beyond his expectation. Meanwhile letters, replete with tenderness, were punctually exchanged. At length the lady suddenly laid aside the pen. The lover's impatience was extreme, and his forebodings terrible. He speeded back to put an end to the torments of suspense. He arrived at midnight at an inn, near the mansion of his mistress. The questions, which fears for her life dictated, were answered by information that three nights before, the lady solemnized her marriage with another. This matter being ascertained, the lover armed himself with pistols, gained access at the back door of the lady's house, explored the way softly to her chamber, drew aside the curtains of her bed, and, contemplating a moment the spectacle, lifted both pistols to his head. The loud discharge, and his prostrate and mangled corpse, were the first testimonials of his presence.

In all these cases love surely was a disease.

### XIII

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS. *For the Weekly Magazine.*  
THE MAN AT HOME.—No. XIII.

[*Weekly Magazine* (April 28, 1798)]

TO be sure! Yet retire for a while: I shall not leap out of the window to escape you. I am weary of my present habitation, and should, in a few days, have put myself within your power. I have

not the least objection to this visit, though, I must own, it was somewhat unexpected.

He is gone. Sheriff's officers are seldom so polite; but he knows that I cannot escape him. There is but one inlet and outlet to this room, and as my dinner is preparing, he was not disposed to baulk my appetite. This little interval may be employed in bringing my lucubrations to a close—an earlier close, by far, than I dreamt of, even so lately as this morning. Fourteen days have been spent shut up in this apartment. Many things have occurred to render memorable this voluntary imprisonment, not to myself only, but to the wide world; who, when it shall have an opportunity of perusing the memoirs of *Bedloe*, will deem the chance that fixed me here, to the last degree, auspicious.

I was somewhat disconcerted by the entrance of this guest. He gave me no warning of his coming, and used no ceremony. He bade me "Good morning:" I returned the salutation, but the abruptness of his introduction, and the strangeness of his countenance, not having seen him before, made me readily suspect his business. This, however, was more fully explained by the paper which he put into my hands, and which, on opening it, I found to be a "Capias ad respondendum."

So; I must now prepare to attend him to the apartment of the debtors. How strange is this procedure? A man has a claim upon me for a certain sum. I refuse to pay it, though I am able; that is, the payment is physically possible. My whole estate consists in public and bank stock. A broker will find a purchaser for these, and furnish me with the whole, or nearly the sum in which I am indebted. By the transfer of this, the obligation is removed. The sale and the subsequent transfer, are both of them, not only possible, but easy. I refuse to perform it, however, and such is the consequence. By virtue of this paper, I am immured within iron gates and stone walls. There must I eat, drink, and sleep, and there must I abide in the intervals. The accommodations may not be perfectly convenient; my companions may be

disagreeable; confinement may injure my health; but these are incidents of my new condition, and are unavoidable. I have chosen my alternative: I have signed, with my own hand, the decree of my imprisonment. It is, to all intents, and purposes, my voluntary act. If my state is irksome; if I see reason to repent my choice, it is by no means irrevocable. It is still in my power to discharge my debt, and to put an end, in a few hours, to my residence in a gaol.

But this conduct must be voluntary: My property cannot be taken from me. Its nature and existence may be ascertained, but there is no method of wresting it from me, but this.

It is natural to enquire with regard to the equity and efficacy of this procedure. According to the fundamental laws of property, that which is in my possession belongs to another. The public interest requires the observance of these laws and the vesting of property in him to whom it belongs. Means must be used for effecting this purpose. If these means be not efficacious, that alone is a sufficient objection to them. Something beside their efficacy, is necessary to their vindication; but nothing will suffice to justify the use of them, if they be not efficacious. The means which are here adopted is the constraint of the person of the debtor. He is to change the place of his abode. His daily walks are to be circumscribed to an area of forty feet square. He is to lodge and eat in company of those whom accident may have placed in the same condition. Such, and such only, are the means which a creditor is at liberty to use, to enforce the payment of a debt.

Are these means efficacious? It cannot be supposed that they should be universally so. There are cases, in which, no doubt, from a variety of causes, imprisonment may, to the debtor, be more eligible than payment. If the penalty were far severer; if the refractory debtor were condemned to the rack or the galleys for his contumacy, cases are conceivable in which the rack or the galleys would be chosen in preference to payment; but much

more so when the penalty is mere imprisonment in its lightest and mildest form. These cases must be allowed to be few in proportion to the rigour of the penalty. The suffering which is annexed to non-payment will influence our choice in proportion to the severity of that suffering: but the conclusion must not therefore be admitted that the most rigorous penalty is the best. We are accustomed to view with indifference the imprisonment of debtors, but we should hardly endure to see them pinioned and carted to the gallows, or even reduced to a state of domestic slavery.

Are these means, lenient and transient as they are, efficacious? If they be so their lenity is advantageous. To gain our ends by means that are precisely adapted to them; that neither exceed nor fall short of the quantity of force required, is an argument of the highest wisdom. But these means, with the exceptions I have just made, must be admitted to be efficacious.

Debts are daily contracted. A sense of honour and interest will occasion the discharge of most of them. Those whose honour is a neutral or powerless principle, or whose interest, instead of exhorting them to punctuality, appears to dissuade them from it, would be negligent, if imprisonment, its inconvenience and its infamy, were not to come in aid. The dread or the endurance of these, when other motives would fail, is commonly found sufficient for the purpose.

This reasoning will be controverted by two kinds of men: those who think imprisonment too slight, and those who think it too severe a penalty. In answer to the first it may be said, that experience proves that this penalty, slight as it is, is efficacious. That the number is very inconsiderable of those whom imprisonment will not compel to pay. That higher penalties will diminish, indeed, but not absolutely annihilate this number. That greater severities, if advantageous in this respect, would be injurious in others, and that these injuries would greatly outweigh the slight additional benefit.

To those who imagine imprisonment too heavy a sentence, it may be urged that every thing which endears or *dignifies* human existence depends upon the sacredness of property; that government is instituted for no beneficial purpose but this; that this purpose requires not merely that I should be *maintained* in the possession of a thing, but likewise, that I should be restored to that possession when it is infringed. From the properties of money, and the nature of commerce or exchange, it not seldom happens, that a sum to which I have a just title, may be actually possessed by another. One of the most momentous ends of government is neglected or subverted if means be not provided for taking this sum out of his possession, and placing it in mine. Means suitable to this purpose are not merely useful to the state, they are essential to the existence of human society.

There are two ways of doing this. The ministers of law may intrude by force into the debtor's coffers, and literally take from them the sum that is owing. It has however adopted another method. Motives are set before the debtor, which induce him to open his coffers and count out the sum himself. To pay or withhold is submitted to his own choice; but his choice is influenced by annexing a penalty to his refusal. If this penalty do not influence his choice, it ought not to be denounced. Another must be chosen which will possess more influence. The penalty must be increased till it answer the end. The dungeon, or wheel, or scaffold are not awarded against refractory debtors, merely because a lighter sentence is sufficient, and every man's experience will prove the sufficiency of a lighter sentence.

If nothing less than scaffold, dungeon, or wheel would answer this end, it ought to be employed. The charge of inhumanity or cruelty would be absurd. The penalty is terrible, but, in order to avoid it, he has only to perform an act of justice. If, rather than perform this act, he embraces the alternative, it follows that this alternative, terrible as it is in itself, and terrible to others, is not terrible to him.

Debtors may be divided into two classes; those who are able but not willing, and those who are willing but not able to pay. These remarks apply only to the first kind of debtors. In what manner shall we treat the disabled or insolvent debtor? With regard to him there is no alternative. A penalty may be annexed to his non-payment, but to elude or incur this penalty is not a matter of choice. With regard to him the state of the case is materially changed. If his imprisonment be just, it must be just for reasons widely different from those by which we justified the restraint of able, but reluctant debtors.

Imprisonment, in cases of utter inability to pay, has found few advocates among enlightened reasoners. The laws of our country have abolished, in *many* cases, though not in all, this species of imprisonment; yet the equity of this procedure is liable to some doubt. I wish the justice of the laws which govern us, to be, in all cases, demonstrable and clear; but I am somewhat apprehensive that, for insolvent debtors to enjoy exemption from imprisonment, is not incontestably just.

The true principles of punishment are evident. The safety of men in a social state is liable to be infringed by the lawless selfishness of individuals. This selfishness is to be restrained, and the general safety be maintained, by the best means in our power. For this end we must annex certain consequences to such actions as are subversive of the general safety. We must denounce penalties and suffering against him that performs them.

These penalties are designed to operate in one way, to prevent the commission of such actions. To contemplate any other end; to inflict evil because evil is the suitable companion of vice; to torment criminals, because, as criminals, they *deserve* to be tormented, is iniquitous and absurd. This absurdity, at least in an *human* agent, is deducible not less from philosophical, than from religious principles. It is as readily admitted by the assertor of the doctrine of moral necessity, as by him who denies it. Our motive must be simple and unmixed; vengeance should actuate us

neither wholly nor in part. The efficacy of the penalty, to hinder the commission of that against which the penalty is denounced, is the proper and sole criterion to which we are bound to conform.

With respect to murderers, their execution, and with regard to insolvent debtors, their imprisonment are parallel cases. The murderer cannot recal his act, nor the debtor pay his debt. The equity of their punishment must therefore stand upon the same ground. It is just inasmuch as it tends to prevent the destruction of life and the infringement of property: So far as it is ineffectual to this, or as it promotes any other end, it is indisputably unjust. By this standard alone must be measured both the one and the other.

All will admit the tendency of the denunciation of punishment, to deter murderers and robbers from the perpetration of their crimes. It will not be as clearly seen how the award of imprisonment tends to diminish the number of insolvent debtors. And yet it is evident that, if men may become insolvent by incontrollable accidents, a shipwreck for example, or casual fire, or through the fault of others, they may likewise become insolvent through their own fault.

That a man may do what he will with his own, is a specious, but fallacious principle. The fallacy is still more glaring of the maxim which should assert a man's right to do what he will with *another's*. What I borrow and what I owe is not my own, but it is subject to my control. Whatever power I may rightfully possess over that which is truly my own, I cannot have the same power over that which accident has indeed placed in my possession, but which rightfully belongs to another. It is a merciful statement which admits that insolvent debtors have become such by using what is another's as if it were their own; but even from this concession it would follow that insolvent debtors are criminal since their power over the property of others is by no means the same as over their own property.

To relinquish these views, which may be accused of being too rigid and refined, it is sufficient to observe that insolvency may arise from various sources, and, that crimes, as well as follies may produce it. It is no doubt proper that distinctions should be made between fraud and negligence, between the insolvency that flows from misfortune and that which flows from knavery. It cannot be denied that the foresight of punishment has a tendency to prevent the commission of fraud as well as of murder, and consequently to prevent fraudulent insolvency.

I feel myself disposed to enter more particularly into this topic, but my dinner has been just placed before me: When I have passed some time in a prison, I shall be more qualified to judge respecting this subject.