“Will You Marry Me?”

Some First-hand Accounts of Marriage Proposals, 1600-1900

Ernest Davis

The Gentleman Next Door Declares his Passion for Mrs. Nickleby
“Phiz” (Hablot K. Browne), 1839.
For my dear brother Joey

My teacher and guide in all matters historical
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Preface

We all know what marriage proposal are like in novels, on stage, in the movies, on TV. But if, like me, you have wondered how people in the past actually went about proposing — here is a collection of sixteen proposals, made by sixteen men to twelve women between 1638 and 1883, recounted in the words of one or both of the participants. Twelve of these resulted in marriage, three were declined, one was accepted but the marriage never took place.

There is no reason whatever to think that the proposals here were representative or typical of their time and place. For one thing, except for Hayes/Webb, each of these couples includes at least one author, more often than not a famous author. I did not follow any system in collecting these or carry out any difficult research; these were just the first that I ran across. The most that can be said about them is that they were possible for the participants. Since some of them would be quite impossible in twenty-first century America, or would have been impossible in other times and places, that statement is not vacuous.

Nine of the proposals here are from memoirs or autobiographies of the woman involved, written years later. Four are letters from the men; for two of these we have the response from the woman. Three are a combination of letters with journal entries. The result is that the different sections of this collection vary widely in style and length. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s proposal to Lydia Jackson is a three-paragraph letter; she clearly responded by letter, but if that letter survives, I could not find it. By contrast, Thomas Barlow’s unsuccessful proposal to Fanny Burney goes on and on over nine pages here, involving three letters and two very long journal entries. Luckily, it is one of the most entertaining.

I have put the examples in backward chronological order. For the twenty-first century readers, in the later examples, the language, attitudes, and behaviors are, on the whole, comparatively natural; as one goes back in time, everything becomes less familiar. I have kept the spelling and punctuation of the edition where I got my information (in the case of Mary Rich, those are certainly those of the modern editor rather than original.) However, I did add paragraph breaks in the 17th-century examples, which, in the original, are an uninterrupted wall of text.

At the front of each of the examples I have added a short biographical note, with some description of the position of the participants (so far as it is known) at the time of the proposal. I have also occasionally added some explanatory material elsewhere in the accounts. All this editorial material is in small font. The images are all in the public domain. Except for the frontispiece and back piece they are all from the corresponding Wikipedia article.

Furthermore, in the middle of compiling this, I was interrupted by the disruption of the coronavirus pandemic, which closed the physical library; I was thereafter limited to materials I could find online.
One somewhat striking point: As one might expect from pre-twentieth century marriages, many of the women involved were, by current standards, very young at the time of their marriage. Laura Ingalls, Anna Snitskina, Lucy Webb, Elizabeth Villa-Real, Lucy Parke, Mary Rich, and Lucy Apsley were, respectively, 18, 20, 19, 17, 18, 16, and 18. But there are almost as many exceptions: Margaret Montgomerie was about 30, two years older than Boswell. Lydia Jackson was almost 33, a year older than Emerson. Anne Murray was 34, 12 years younger than Halkett. Elizabeth Barrett was 40, six years older than Browning. Fanny Burney was 41, four years younger than d’Arblay. (Incidentally, Barrett and Burney each had a child after they were married.)

Another point: In the nineteenth-century proposals, money is never mentioned. In the eighteenth- and seventeenth-century proposals, except for Apsley/Hutchinson, it was always discussed, often at length.

Finally, I consider this a work in progress, so if you know of any particularly interesting first-person accounts of marriage proposals from the 19th century, or moderately interesting accounts from the 18th century, or any accounts at all from the 17th century or earlier, please do email me, and I will add them.

Ernest Davis  
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Laura Ingalls and Almanzo Wilder

Laura Ingalls (1867-1957) and Almanzo Wilder (1857-1949) married 1885.

Laura Ingalls Wilder and Almanzo Wilder, c. 1885

Laura Ingalls Wilder was the author of a series of eight children’s books Little House in the Big Woods through These Happy Golden Years, describing her own childhood in a pioneer family in the American West, and her husband’s childhood on a farm in upstate New York.

In 1883, the Ingalls family was living in De Smet, North Dakota, where her father had gotten a homestead. Laura was sixteen, finishing her schooling, and preparing for her own certification as a school teacher. Almanzo Wilder had moved to the area in 1879. Wilder’s courtship of Laura is described in the two last books of the series, The Long Winter, and These Happy Golden Years. They were married on August 25, 1885.

It is a curious thought that, though Laura Ingalls was, at the time of her engagement, the poorest in material terms of all the people in this collection, with the possible exception of Lydia Jackson Emerson, she is now, for twenty-first century Americans, unquestionably the best known.
From Laura Ingalls Wilder, *These Happy Golden Years*:

Again silence came and was unbroken while Barnum on his own accord turned north toward the house. Then Laura said, “I’ve sung for you, now I’ll give you a penny for your thoughts.”

“I was wondering . . .” Almanzo paused. Then he picked up Laura’s hand that shone white in the starlight, and his sun-browned hand closed gently over it. He had never done that before. “Your hand is so small,” he said. Another pause. Then quickly, “I was wondering if you would like an engagement ring”

“That would depend on who offered it to me,” Laura told him.

“If I should?” Almanzo asked.

“Then it would depend on the ring,” Laura answered, and drew her hand away.

It was later than usual when Almanzo came next Sunday.

“Sorry to be so late,” he said, when Laura was seated in the buggy and they were driving away.

“We can take a shorter drive,” Laura answered.

“But we want to go to Lake Henry. This is about our last chance for wild grapes, now they are frosted,” Almanzo told her.

It was a sunny afternoon, warm for the time of year. On either side of the narrow road between the twin lakes, ripened wild grapes were hanging from their vines in the trees. Almanzo drove slowly, and, reaching from the buggy, he and Laura picked the clusters of grapes. They ate of their tangy sweetness as they watched the water rippling in the sunshine and watched the waves lapping on the shore.

As they drove home, the sun went down in a flaming western sky. Twilight settled over the prairie and the evening wind blew softly through the buggy.

Then driving with one hand, with the other Almanzo lifted Laura’s, and she felt something cool slip over her first finger while he reminded her, “You said it would depend on the ring. How do you like this one?”

Laura held her hand up to the first light of the new moon. The gold of the ring and its faint over set shone in the faint moon radiance. Three small stones set in the golden oval glimmered.

“The set is a garnet, with a pearl on each side,” Almanzo told her.

“It is a beautiful ring,” Laura said. “I think . . . I would like to have it.”

“Then leave it on. It is yours, and next summer I will build a little house in the grove on the tree claim. It will have to be a little house. Do you mind?”

“I have always lived in little houses. I like them,” Laura answered.
They had almost reached home. Lamplight shone from its windows, and Pa was playing the fiddle. Laura knew the song, it was one that he often sang to Ma. His voice rose with its music and he sang,

A beautiful castle I've built for thee  
In dreamland far away,  
And there, gentle darling, come dwell with me  
Where love alone has sway.  
Oh sweet will be our blisses,  
Oh rare will be our blisses!  
We’ll tell our time by the lovers’ chime  
That strikes the hour with kisses.

Barnum was quiet while Laura and Almanzo stood beside the buggy when Pa’s song was finished. Then Laura held up her face in the faint moonlight. “You may kiss me good night,” she said, and after their first kiss, she went into the house, while Almanzo drove away.

Pa laid down his fiddle when Laura came in. He looked at her hand where the ring sparkled in the lamplight.

“I see it is settled,” he said. “Almanzo was talking to me yesterday, and I guess it is all right.”

“If only you are sure, Laura” Ma said gently. “Sometimes I think it is the horses you care for, more than their master.”

“I couldn’t have one without the other,” Laura said shakily.

Then Ma smiled at her, Pa cleared his throat gruffly, and Laura knew they both understood what she was too shy to say.
Anna Snitkina and Fyodor Dostoevsky

Anna Snitkina (1846-1918) and Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881). Married 1867.

Fyodor Dostoevsky was a great Russian novelist. In 1866 he was already famous as the author of *Poor Folk*, *Notes from Underground*, and *Crime and Punishment* among other works. His first wife Maria Dmitrievna Isaeva had died in 1864, with no children.

Anna Snitskina was 20 years old in 1866. She had graduated high school and trained as a stenographer, and started working as a stenographer for Dostoevsky on his novel *The Gambler* in October 1866. A month later he proposed to her, and on February 15, 1867, they were married. They had four children together (one died in early childhood). In later life she wrote two memoirs of her life with Dostoevsky.

From Anna Dostoevskaya, *Dostoevsky Reminiscences* trans. Beatrice Stillman

The eighth of November, 1866, was one of the great days of my life. That was the day Fyodor Mikhailovich told me that he loved me and asked me to be his wife. Half a century has passed since then, and yet every detail is as sharp in my memory as if it had happened a month ago.

It was a brilliant, frosty day. I walked to his house, and therefore arrived half an hour later than the appointed time. He had apparently been waiting for me for a long time. When he heard my voice he appeared in the vestibule at once.
“So you’re here at last!” he said happily and began helping me undo my hood and take off my coat. Together we went into his study. It was very bright on this occasion, and I was surprised to notice that he was excited about something. The expression on his face was heightened, fervid, almost ecstatic, and made him look much younger.

“How happy I am that you’ve come! I was so afraid you’d forget your promise.”

“What on earth made you think such a thing? Once I give my word I always keep it.”

“Forgive me—I know you always keep your word. It’s only that I’m so very glad to see you again!

“And I’m glad to see you, Fyodor Mikhailovich, and in such a cheerful mind at that. Has something pleasant happened to you?”

“Yes, it has. Last night I had a marvelous dream.”

“Oh, is that all!” And I started to laugh.

“Please don’t laugh. I attribute great meaning to dreams. My dreams are always prophetic. When I dream about my dead brother Misha or particularly when I dream of my father, I know that it portends some catastrophe.”

“In that case, please tell me your dream!”

“Do you see that big rosewood box? That is a gift from my Siberian friend Chokan Valikhano and I value it very much. I keep my manuscripts and letters in it, and other things that are precious to me for their memories. And so this is my dream: I was sitting in front of that box and rearranging the papers in it. Suddenly something sparkled among them, some kind of bright little star. I was leafing through the papers and the star kept appearing and disappearing. And this was intriguing to me. I started slowly putting all the papers to one side. And there among them I found a little diamond, a tiny one, but very sparkling and brilliant.”

“And what did you do with it?”

“That’s the pity of it—I can’t remember! There were other dreams after that and I don’t know what became of the diamond. But that was a good dream!”

“You know that dreams are usually explained as having the opposite meaning.” I remarked, and instantly regretted my words. His face quickly changed, seemed to darken.

“So you think no happiness will ever come to me? All that ... all that is only a vain hope?” he said pitifully.

“I’m not capable of interpreting dreams, and anyway I don’t really believe in them.”
... It has long been our custom, when I came to take his dictation, for him to tell me what he had been doing and where he had been during the time we weren’t together. So I was quick to ask him how he had been keeping busy during the last days.

“I’ve been thinking up a plot for a new novel,” he answered.

“You don’t say! An interesting novel?”

“To me, quite interesting. The thing is, though that I can’t seem to work out the ending. The psychology of a young girl is involved in it. If I were in Moscow I would ask my niece, Sonechka, but as it is I shall turn to you for help.

Proudly I prepared to give my “help” to the brilliant novelist. “Who is the hero of your novel, then?”

“An artist. a man no longer young — well, in a word — a man about my own age.”

“Oh tell me, do tell me about it,” I begged, very curious about this new novel.

And now a brilliant improvisation poured out. Never, neither before nor afterwards, did I hear from him such an inspired tale as on that day. The further he went, the clearer it grew to me that he was telling about his own life, only changing names and situations. Here were all the things that he had previously spoken of to me in bits and fragments, but now his detailed consecutive account explained a great deal about his relationships with his family and with his late wife.

The new novel also contained a harsh childhood, the early loss of a beloved father, some kind of fatal circumstance (a serious malady) which for ten years tore the artist away from life and his beloved art. Then, his return to life (the artist’s recovery from his illness), his meeting with the woman with whom he fell in love, the tortments this love caused him, the death of his wife, and of someone else close to him (a beloved sister), poverty, debt ... 

The hero’s inner state, his loneliness, his disenchantment with the people close to him, his hunger for a new life, his need for love, his passionate desire to find happiness again were depicted so vividly and with such fire that it was evident they were not merely the fruit of his imaginative power but had been experienced by the author himself.

Dostoyevsky did not spare the darker shades in delineating his hero. By his own words his hero was a man grown old before his time, sick with an incurable disease (a paralyzed hand), gloomy, suspicious; possessed of a tender heart, it is true, but incapable of expressing his feelings; an artist and a talented one, perhaps, but a failure who had not once in his life succeeded in embodying his ideas in the forms he dreamed of, and who never ceased to torment himself over that fact.

Seeing Fyodor Mikhailovich himself in the hero of his novel, I could not keep
from interrupting, “But why, Fyodor Mikhailovich, do you insult your hero so?”

“I see that you do not find him likable.”

“On the contrary, I find him very likable. He has a splendid heart. Think how many sorrows have fallen to his lot, and how meekly he submits to them! Another man experiencing so much misery in his life would doubtless have grown hard, but your hero goes on loving people and helping them. No, you are being decidedly unfair to him.”

“Yes, I agree that he has a kind and loving heart. And how happy I am that you understand him!”

He went on with his story: “And so, in that critical period of his life, the artist meets a young girl of our age, or perhaps a year or two older. Let’s give her the name of Anya so as not to have to call her “the heroine”. It’s a nice name, Anya.”

These words confirmed my conviction that by “the heroine” he was alluding to his former fiancée Anna Korvin-Krokovskaya. It quite went out of my head at that moment that my own name was also Anna—so little did I feel that the story had any connection with myself. The theme of the new novel might have come into being (or so I thought) as a result of a letter he had recently received from her from abroad, which he had told me about a few days before.

The heroine’s portrait was painted in different colors from the hero’s. According to the author, Anna was gentle, wise, kind, bubbling with life, and possessed of great tact in personal relationships. But I, who in those days attached much importance to feminine beauty, couldn’t keep from asking, “And is your heroine pretty?”

“She isn’t a real beauty, of course, but she is very nice-looking. I love her face.”

Now I felt that he had let the cat out of the bag. Something pinched in my heart. A hateful feeling toward Anna Korvin-Krakovskaya took hold of me and I said, “But, Fyodor Mikhailovich, you are over-idealizing your ‘Anya’. Can she really be all that?”

“She is just precisely ‘all that’! I have studied her through and through!”

He went on with his story: “The hero used to meet Anya in art circles and the more he saw of her the more he liked her and the stronger his conviction grew that he might find happiness with her. And still, his dream seemed to him almost impossible. For, as a matter of fact, What could this elderly, sick, debt-ridden man give a young, alive, exuberant girl? Wouldn’t her love for him involve a terrible sacrifice on her part? And afterwards, wouldn’t she bitterly regret uniting her life with his? And in general, would it be possible for a young girl so different in age and personality to fall in love with my artist? Wouldn’t that be psychologically false? That is what I wanted to ask your opinion about, Anna Grigoryevna.”

“But why would it be impossible? For if, as you say, your Anya isn’t merely an
empty flirt and has a kind, responsive heart, why couldn’t she fall in love with your artist? What if he is poor and sick? Where’s the sacrifice on her part, anyway? If she really loves him, she’ll be happy, too, and she’ll never have to regret anything!”

I spoke with some heat. Fyodor Mikhailovich looked at me in excitement. “And you seriously believe she could love him genuinely, and for the rest of her life?”

He fell silent, as if hesitating. “Put yourself in her place for a moment,” he said in a trembling voice. “Imagine that this artist is me; that I have confessed my love to you and asked you to be my wife. Tell me, what would you answer?”

His face revealed such deep embarrassment, such inner torment, that I understood at long last that this was not a conversation about literature; that if I gave him an evasive answer I would deal a deathblow to his self-esteem and pride. I looked at his troubled face, which had become so dear to me, and said, “I would answer that I love you and will love you all my life.”

I won’t try to convey the words full of tenderness and love that he said to me then; they are sacred to me. I was stunned, almost crushed by the immensity of my happiness and for a long time I couldn’t believe it.
Rutherford B. Hayes and Lucy Webb

Rutherford B. Hayes (1822-1893) and Lucy Webb (1831-1889). Married 1851.

Rutherford B. Hayes and Lucy Webb, wedding daguerreotype

Rutherford B. Hayes, 19th President of the United States, is now chiefly remembered for the scandal of the 1876 Hayes vs. Tilden election. Prior to being President, he was a lawyer who defended runaway slaves, an abolitionist, a general in the Union army, a Congressman, Governor of Ohio, and a diarist.

Lucy Webb Hayes was the first First Lady to be widely covered in the press, and the first to have a college degree. She was known for her pro-temperance views (social functions at the White House were dry during Hayes’ Presidency) and her advocacy for African Americans. These earned her intense admiration from some and mockery from others.

Hayes and Webb first met in 1845. In 1850, Hayes was building a law practice in Cincinnati. Webb had graduated college (the Cincinnati Wesleyan Female College). Hayes’ older sister Fanny Platt encouraged him to visit with Lucy again and they soon fell in love. He proposed to her in person on June 14, 1851, and sent her a long love letter on June 22. They were married December 30, 1852.

From Rutherford B. Hayes’ Diary Saturday June 14, 1851

[I] went on my way ... and naturally turned into the gate south side of Sixth, next house east of Dr. Priestley’s church — a blessed vicinity forever more in my memory
— and soon was chatting gaily with my — since a goodly time — “received ideal” of a cheerful, truthful, trusing, loving, and lovable girl, who might have been the original in many points of Hawthorne’s Phoebe — the sunbeam in “The House of the Seven Gables”; or of the fairy in Ik Marvel’s revery over the anthracite, with “the deep eye reaching back to the spirit; not the trading eye, weighing your purse; nor the beastly eye, weighing your appearance; but the heart’s eye, weighing your soul! An eye full of deep, tender, earnest feeling. An eye which looked on once, you long to look on again; an eye which will haunt your dreams; an eye which will give a color; in spite of you, to all your reveries. An eye which lies before you in your future, like a star in the mariner’s heavens, by which unconsciously you take all your observations.”

I listened carelessly, with a free and easy feeling, to her talk “soft and low” — tones and voice just matching that otherwise matchless eye; not matchless for its brilliancy, or magnetizing power, or beauty even, but for its tenderness and goodness. We finally spoke of Delaware and then of the Agards, an humble family of no special interest to me, except as joined in my memory with dear recollections of childhood. I proposed to call and see them. We stopped a few doors west into their domicile; had a queer cordial welcome from the two old maids and Theron. Oh, how fallen from the “big boy” as I remember him years ago! After our return she, with the fine voice and eye, compared the two spinsters to Dora’s aunts in “Copperfield”. We spoke of different topics. I was sleepy from bad rest the night before, told her so, but talked on.

On a sudden the impulse seized me — unthought of, un[pre]meditated, involuntary, and (I was sitting in a rush bottom rocking-chair in front of her, she on a short sofa) I grasped her hand hastily in my own and with a smile, but earnestly and quick accents, said “I love you.” She did not comprehend it; really, no sham; and I repeated [it] more deliberately. She was not startled — no fluttering; but a puzzled expression of pleasure and surprise stole over her fine features. She grew more lovely every breath, returned the pressure of my hand. I knew it was as I wished, but I waited, perhaps repeated [my declaration] again, until she said, “I must confess, I like you very well.” A queer, soft, lovely tone, it stole to the very heat, and I. without loosing her hand took a seat by her side and — — — and the faith was plighted for life!

A quiet, smiling, satisfied silence, broken by an occasional loving word followed. She said, “I don’t know but I am dreaming. I thought I was too light and trifling for you.” I spoke of friends. She said in reply to [my question] “What would your mother think of her daughter’s foolish act?” — “What would your sister think of it?” And so and so — [Her] brother Joseph came in, and after a short while I went home to dream of it all again and again.

Diary and Letters of Rutherford Burchard Hayes vol. 1 pp. 365-6 ed. Charles

— According to the editor of Hayes’ diary, this is misquoted, though the general content is correct.
Letter from Rutherford Hayes to Lucy Webb

[The editor of Hayes’ letters has made some cuts in this letter and I have made a few more. The editor points out that both of the quotes of poetry are from Milton’s Comus, and both are slightly misquoted.]

Columbus, June 22, 1851

Dearest Lucy:— I know it is very wicked of me to spend this holy Sabbath morning writing sweet nonsense to my lady-love instead of piously preparing to go to church with mother, as a dutiful son out to do, but then I’m hardly responsible. This love is, indeed, an awful thing, as Byron said, “it interferes with all a man’s projects for good and glory.” Besides I am only fulfilling my scriptural destiny in “forsaking father and mother” and all that — and — I can’t quote any farther. But the pith of it is — leaving your mother to go alone to church and stealing off up into a quiet chamber to spoil good paper with wretched scribbling to puzzle the eye of the dearest girl of all the world. Well, you’ll forgive the sin I hope. I know you have if you have thought a tithe as much about me — but you haven’t — as I have about you, the five or six days past — and with a pardon beaming from your — I was a-going to say deep, and then sweet, but no one word can describe it — eye, I can feel a heathenish indifference to any other forgiveness. For “at this present” that eye has become to me, and I trust will ever continue, “like a star in the mariner’s heaven” — an eye which is to give color, shape, and character to all my future hopes, fancies, and “reveries.”

To think that I am beginning that revery! To think that that lovely vision is an actual, living, breathing being, and is loved by me, and loves in return, and will one day be my bride — my abiding, forgiving, trustful, loving wife — to make my happy home blessed indeed with her cheerful smile and silver voice and warm true heart!

I don’t know, Lucy dearest, what you think of it, but — if I could quote Tom Moore I would —

”... if there be an Elysium of bliss
   It is this —it is this!

I thought when I began this letter I would talk only about facts, persons, and such little bits of gossip as I have picked up about our common friends and acquaintances here and at Delaware, but behold I only talk of love, and tell you what I suppose I shall tell you a million times hereafter, how fast you are becoming the “be-all and end-all” of my hopes, thoughts, affections, nay, existence. I was never of a melancholy
turn of thought or feeling. I should always have been selected, I think, as one of
the constitutionally happy. But really I begin to suspect that I have never known
much about living. Long before I thought the time had come to tell you of the warm
feeling that was nestling snugly in my heart, I had tried to form an opinion of your
sentiments towards me, and, to speak truly, I always had a presentiment that Fate
or Fortune, or Heaven had linked our destinies together. Yet notwithstanding this
feeling, the being told so, the hearing it from your own lips, the learning it from your
own warmly clasped hand and granted kiss, has made a happy fellow of me ever since.
I can say with a character in one of Milton’s smaller poems,

“Such a home-felt delight
Such a sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never felt till now.”

I feel that you will not only be the making of my happiness, but also of my
fortunes or success in life. The truth is I never did half try to be anything, or to do
anything. There was no motive — no call, as you Methodists would say. I could be
respected, after a fashion, for the mere possession of certain powers and acquirements
without exercising them, and so I have lived, not an idle, but a useless sort of life.
Hereafter I hope all that will be quite changed. Your position and happiness are to
depend on me, and no higher motive could now be named to stimulate me to effort.
Not that I am a-going all of a sudden to become an ambitious schemer, struggling for
a name, or an avaricious dog, toiling for wealth. No, no. In the future as in the past,
happiness by quiet humble paths shall be the prize. Only now I believe I shall have
purpose and steadiness to keep ever doing, looking to your happiness and approval
as my best reward. You will think me very egotistical to talk so much of self and
selfish motives, aims, and resolves; but, Lucy, I think of these things and feel this
way, and hereafter with you I mean to think aloud and I wish you to do the same
with me. If we are to spend our lives with and for each other, the more intimately
and thoroughly we understand each other the better each will be able to please the
other.

I can not be vain enough to think that love will blind you to my deficiencies and
faults; but doubtless there are many which I might remove or remedy if I could but
fully know your thoughts and tastes in regard to them. Some faults and imperfections
we all have which cannot be got rid of; and with such, sensible people will always
cheerfully bear in those they love; but I cannot help feeling surprise every day that
friends and lovers are not more true to their duties in aiding each other in cultivating
the graces of character and life which depend more on education and habit than on the
natural constitution. Within certain limits the formation of character and manners,
tastes and disposition, is within our own control. If we do but try — try heartily
and cheerfully — we can be, for all the purposes of every-day happiness, precisely
what we would wish to be. But I have sermonized too long even for a Sunday. If you
don’t like such preaching, you must adopt my theory, and endeavor to break me of
the habit. In future I am your pupil, and if you do not form me to such character,
tastes, and disposition, as will be congenial to your own, and make your life happy
with me, remember you must share in the responsibility.

Fanny noticed the ring on my finger and asked me where I got it. I told her,
when she replied, smiling archly, “I thought it meant something.” This is the only
intimation I have given as to what is what. Mrs. Dr. Little inquired particularly after
you, but I gave her no new light. Mrs. Solis too wanted to have her eyes opened but I
talked about Miss K- and hardly said “Lucy” once. Nevertheless she rather suspects
“rats,” I guess. My old flame, Miss K-, was very inquisitive about that ring. She was
sure it was not worn without an object, I stoutly denied all. Finally she said, “Give
it to me.” I said, “No, I will exchange,” and took a ring from her finger which I knew
her “adored” had given her. She has bantered me a good deal, and finally said I must
bring you to see her when she came to Cincinnati again. I promised to do so, if you
would consent to walk with me, “and then,” she says, “I can tell.” . . .

There now, haven’t I written you a long letter? If you are as much puzzled with
my pothooks and quail-tracks as some of my friends have been you will have to wait
till I return before you know what I have written. You better try, however, to spell it
out. You must learn to read it sometime you know, and for your consolation, I would
remark that I can write a great deal worse and not half try either!

Believe me faithfully yours,

RUTHERFORD
Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett

Robert Browning (1812-1889) and Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861). Married 1846.

Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning
Paintings by Thomas Read (1853)

Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning were both important poets in Victorian England.

Elizabeth Barrett wrote poetry from the age of eleven. At the age of the fifteen, she developed a life-long chronic illness, with severe head and spinal pain, which she treated with opiate. She began publishing adult poems at the age of 38. In 1844 she published two volumes of Poems with great success. In particular Robert Browning, at the time a much less successful poet, was enormously impressed, and first wrote to her, then visited her. A warm friendship soon turned into a passionate romantic attachment. The two married secretly on September 12, 1846, and travelled to Italy. Barrett’s domineering father disinherited her (he disinherited all his children who married).

The first letter below is from Browning to Barrett (I have included only the last paragraph); the second is her answer.

The groups of three dots in these letters are the authors’ own punctuation, not editorial ellipses.
Robert Browning to Elizabeth Barrett

[Post-mark, September 25, 1845.]

How ‘all changes!’ When I first knew you — you know what followed. I supposed you to labour under an incurable complaint — and, of course, to be completely dependent on your father for its commonest alleviations; the moment after that inconsiderate letter, I reproached myself bitterly with the selfishness apparently involved in any proposition I might then have made — for though I have never been at all frightened of the world, nor mistrustful of my power to deal with it, and get my purpose out of it if once I thought it worth while, yet I could not but feel the consideration, of what failure would now be, paralyse all effort even in fancy. When you told me lately that ‘you could never be poor’ — all my solicitude was at an end — I had but myself to care about, and I told you, what I believed and believe, that I can at any time amply provide for that, and that I could cheerfully and confidently undertake the removing that obstacle. Now again the circumstances shift — and you are in what I should wonder at as the veriest slavery — and I who could free you from it, I am here scarcely daring to write ... though I know you must feel for me and forgive what forces itself from me ... what retires so mutely into my heart at your least word ... what shall not be again written or spoken, if you so will ... that I should be made happy beyond all hope of expression by. Now while I dream, let me once dream! I would marry you now and thus — I would come when you let me, and go when you bade me — I would be no more than one of your brothers — ’no more’ — that is, instead of getting to-morrow for Saturday, I should get Saturday as well — two hours for one — when your head ached I should be here. I deliberately choose the realization of that dream (— of sitting simply by you for an hour every day) rather than any other, excluding you, I am able to form for this world, or any world I know — And it will continue but a dream.

God bless my dearest E.B.B.

R.B.

You understand that I see you to-morrow, Friday, as you propose.

I am better — thank you — and will go out to-day.

You know what I am, what I would speak, and all I would do.

Elizabeth Barrett to Robert Browning

Friday Evening.

[Post-mark, September 27, 1845.]
I had your letter late last night, everyone almost, being out of the house by an accident, so that it was left in the letter-box, and if I had wished to answer it before I saw you, it had scarcely been possible.

But it will be the same thing — for you know as well as if you saw my answer, what it must be, what it cannot choose but be, on pain of sinking me so infinitely below not merely your level but my own, that the depth cannot bear a glance down. Yet, though I am not made of such clay as to admit of my taking a base advantage of certain noble extravagances, (and that I am not I thank God for your sake) I will say, I must say, that your words in this letter have done me good and made me happy, ... that I thank and bless you for them, ... and that to receive such a proof of attachment from you, not only overpowers every present evil, but seems to me a full and abundant amends for the merely personal sufferings of my whole life. When I had read that letter last night I did think so. I looked round and round for the small bitternesses which for several days had been bitter to me, and I could not find one of them. The tear-marks went away in the moisture of new, happy tears. Why, how else could I have felt? how else do you think I could? How would any woman have felt ... who could feel at all ... hearing such words said (though ‘in a dream’ indeed) by such a speaker?

And now listen to me in turn. You have touched me more profoundly than I thought even you could have touched me — my heart was full when you came here to-day. Henceforward I am yours for everything but to do you harm — and I am yours too much, in my heart, ever to consent to do you harm in that way. If I could consent to do it, not only should I be less loyal ... but in one sense, less yours. I say this to you without drawback and reserve, because it is all I am able to say, and perhaps all I shall be able to say. However this may be, a promise goes to you in it that none, except God and your will, shall interpose between you and me, ... I mean, that if He should free me within a moderate time from the trailing chain of this weakness, I will then be to you whatever at that hour you shall choose ... whether friend or more than friend ... a friend to the last in any case. So it rests with God and with you — only in the meanwhile you are most absolutely free ... ‘unentangled’ (as they call it) by the breadth of a thread — and if I did not know that you considered yourself so, I would not see you any more, let the effort cost me what it might. You may force me feel: ... but you cannot force me to think contrary to my first thought ... that it were better for you to forget me at once in one relation. And if better for you, can it be bad for me? which flings me down on the stone-pavement of the logicians.

And now if I ask a boon of you, will you forget afterwards that it ever was asked? I have hesitated a great deal; but my face is down on the stone-pavement — no — I will not ask to-day — It shall be for another day — and may God bless you on this and on those that come after, my dearest friend.
Ralph Waldo Emerson and Lydia Jackson

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Lydia Jackson (1802-1892) married 1835.

Lydia Jackson Emerson with Edward Waldo Emerson / Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an essayist, poet, lecturer, and philosopher, and a leader of the Transcendentalist movement. He married his first wife, Ellen Louisa Tucker, in 1829, but she died of tuberculosis in 1831. He was licenced as a minister and ordained to the Unitarian Church in 1829, but left the church and resigned his position as a pastor in 1832. In 1833 he began a career as a public lecturer (by the end of his life, he had given 1500 lectures). In 1835 he had not yet done any significant writing.

Lydia Jackson came from a poor family. In 1834 she heard Emerson lecture twice; the second time she met him at a social gathering. Soon afterward, Emerson proposed to her in the letter below. She was very much involved in the social issues of her time, including the abolition of slavery, the rights of women and of Native Americans, and the welfare of animals.
To Miss Lydia Jackson,

I obey my highest impulses in declaring to you the feeling of deep and tender respect with which you have inspired me. I am rejoiced in my Reason as well as in my Understanding by finding an earnest and noble mind whose presence quickens in mine all that is good and shames and repels from me my own weakness. Can I resist the impulse to beseech you to love me? The strict limits of the intercourse I have enjoyed, have certainly not permitted the manifestation of that tenderness which is the first sentiment in the common kindness between man and woman. But I am not less in love, after a new and higher way. I have immense desire that you should love me, and that I might live with you always. My own assurance of the truth and fitness of the alliance — the union I desire, is so perfect, that it will not admit the thought of hesitation — never of refusal on your part. I could scratch out the word. I am persuaded that I address one so in love with what I love, so conscious with me of the everlasting principles, and seeking the presents of the common Father through means so like, that no remoteness of condition could much separate us, and that an affection founded on such a basis, cannot alter.

I will not embarrass this expression of my heart and mind with any second considerations. I am not therefore blind to them. They touch the past and the future — our friends as well as ourselves, & even the Departed. But I see clearly how your consent shall resolve them all.

And think it not strange, as you will not, that I write rather than speak. In the gravest acts of my life I more willingly trust my pen than my tongue. It is as true. And yet had I been master of my time at this moment, I should bring my letter in my own hand. But I had no leave to wait a day after my mind was made up. Say to me therefore anything but NO. Demand any time for conversation, for consideration, and I will come to Plymouth with a joyful heart. And so God bless you, dear and blessed Maiden, and incline you to love your true friend.

Ralph Waldo Emerson.
Fanny Burney

Fanny Burney (1752-1840)
Proposal from Thomas Barlow (1750/1-?) Declined 1775.
Proposal from General Alexandre d’Arblay (1748-1818). Accepted. Married 1793.

Frances (Fanny) Burney was one of the great comic English novelists of the 18th century. She also kept a very detailed diary, from which the excerpts below are taken. Her father, to whom she was very close, was Charles Burney, a musician and man of letters, not wealthy but with many friends and connections in both the intellectual and the aristocratic worlds.

In 1775, when she received a marriage proposal from Thomas Barlow, she was 22, and had not yet published anything. The long account of the proposal, including two letters from Barlow, one letter from Burney, and long excerpts from Burney’s diary, is given below. For the current reader, Barlow’s letters read so much like self-parodies, and it is so hard to believe that any human being, even a twenty-four year old suitor in 1775, could have written them with a straight face, that one would be tempted to suppose that Burney had used her comic gifts to improve them; but apparently the originals survive among Burney’s papers. As far as I can determine, nothing is known of Barlow besides this record.

Burney immediately decided to decline Barlow’s offer, but nonetheless consulted with her father and some friends. Her father favored accepting the proposal, but did not insist on it. Samuel Crisp, an older friend with whom
she was extremely close (she wrote to him as ‘Daddy’) was much more insis-
tent; he told her that she would be mad to decline such an eligible offer, and
that it made him furious just to think of it. “You may live to the age of your
grandmother and not meet with so valuable an offer.” However, she stuck to
her decision.

In 1778 Burney published her first novel *Evelina*, at first anonymously, but the
secret soon leaked. It was a run-away success, though, being a first-time author
with no idea how to negotiate with the publisher, it did not make her much
money. In 1782 she published *Cecilia* likewise very successfully.

In 1785, Queen Charlotte offered her a position at court, which she accepted.
She and still more her father were ardent monarchists. The duties turned out
to be arduous, dreary, and unpleasant; she could barely do any writing and her
health suffered for it. In 1790, her father was finally prevailed on to request
that she be released from it, and she was awarded a pension of 100 pounds a
year.

In 1791, she met General Alexandre d’Arblay. General d’Arblay had been a
participant in the early stages of the French Revolution, and had been adjutant-
general to Lafayette. But like Lafayette, when the Revolution became more
radical, he had to flee, and he was in exile in England. D’Arblay proposed to
Burney as described below. Her father was opposed to it, since d’Arblay was a
constitutionalist, a Catholic, and an exile with no source of income. However,
again she followed her own judgment, and they were married on July 28, 1795.

**Fanny Burney rejects a proposal from Thomas Barlow**

*From Fanny Burney’s journal, May 20, 1775*

This month is called a *tender* one. It has proved so *to* me but not *in* me. I have
not breathed one sigh, — felt one sensation, — or uttered one folly the more for the
softness of the season. However, I have met with a youth whose heart, if he is to be
credited, has been less guarded — indeed it has yielded itself so suddenly, that had
it been in any other month — I should not have known how to have accounted for so
easy a conquest.

The first day of this month I drank tea and spent the evening at Mr. Burney’s, at
the request of my sister, to meet a very stupid family, which she told me it would be
charity to herself to give my time to. This family consisted of Mrs. O’Connor and her
daughter, by a first marriage, Miss Dickenson, who, poor creature, has the misfortune
to be deaf and dumb. They are very old acquaintances of my grandmother Burney,
to oblige whom my sister invited them. My grandmother and two aunts therefore
were of the party: — as as also Mr. Barlow, a young man who has lived and boarded
with Mrs. O’Connor for about two years.
Mr. Barlow is rather short, but handsome. He is very well bred, ... good-tempered and sensible young man. ... He bears an excellent character both for disposition and morals. He has read more than he has conversed, and seems to know but little of the world; his language therefore is stiff and uncommon, and seems laboured if not affected — he has a great desire to please, but no elegance of manners; neither, though he may be very worthy, is he at all agreeable.

Unfortunately, however, he happened to be prodigiously civil to me, and though I have met with much more gallantry occasionally, yet I could not but observe a seriousness of attention much more expressive than complimenting.

As my sister knew not how to wile away the time, I proposed, after supper, a round of cross questions. This was agreed to. Mr. Barlow, who sat next to me, took near half an hour to settle upon what he should ask me, and at last his question was — What I thought most necessary in Love? I answered — Constancy. I hope for his own sake he will not remember this answer long, though he readily subscribed to it at the time.

The coach came for me about eleven. I rose to go. He earnestly entreated me to stay one or two minutes. I did not, however, think such compliance at all requisite, and therefore only offered to set my grandmother down in my way. The party then broke up. Mrs. O'Connor began an urgent invitation to all present to return the visit the next week. Mr Barlow, who followed me, repeated it very pressingly to me, hoping I would make one. I promised that I would.

When we had all taken leave of our host and hostess, my grandmother, according to custom, gave me a kiss and her blessing. I would fain have eluded my aunts, as nothing can be so disagreeable as kissing before young men; however, they chose it should go round; and after them Mrs. O'Connor also saluted me, as did her daughter, desiring to be better acquainted with me. This disagreeable ceremony over, Mr. Barlow came up to me, and making an apology, which, not suspecting his intention, I did not understand, — he gave me a most ardent salute! I have seldom been more surprised. I had no idea of his taking such a freedom. However, I have told my good friends that for the future I will not chuse to lead, or have led, so contagious an example. [I wonder so modest a man could dare be so bold.]

He came down stairs with us and waited at the door, I believe, till the coach was out of sight.

Four days after this meeting, my mother and Mrs. Young happened to be in the parlour when I received a letter which, from the strong resemblance of the handwriting in the direction to that of Mr. Crisp, I immediately opened and thought came from Chesington; but what was my surprise to see “Madam” at the beginning and at the conclusion — “Your sincere admirer and very humble servant, Thos. Barlow.”

I read it three or four times before I could credit my eyes. An acquaintance so short, and a procedure so hasty astonished me. It is a most tender epistle and
contains a passionate declaration of attachment, hinting at hopes of a return, and so forth.

**Letter from Thomas Barlow to Fanny Burney**

Madam — Uninterrupted happiness we are told is of short duration, and is quickly succeeded by Anxiety, which moral Axiom I really experienc’d on the Conclusion of May-day at Mr. Charles Burney’s, as the singular Pleasure of your Company was so soon Eclips’d by the rapidity of ever-flying Time; but the felicity, tho’ short, was too great to keep within the limits of one Breast; I must therefore intreat your Pardon for the Liberty I take in attempting to reiterate the satisfaction I then felt, and paying a Tythe of Justice to the amiable Lady from whom it proceeded, permit me then Madam, with the greatest sincerity, to assure you, that the feelings of that Evening were among the most refined I ever enjoy’d, and discovered such a latent Spring of Happiness from the Company of the Fair, which I had positively before then been a Stranger to; I had ’til then thought, all Ladys might be flatter’d, but I now experience the contrary, and am assur’d, Language cannot possibly depict the soft Emotions of a mind captivated by so much Merit; and have now a Contest between my ardourous Pen, stimulated by so pleasing and so just a subject, on the one side, and a dread of being accused of Adulation on the other; however, endeavouring at Justice, and taking Truth (in her plainest Attire) for my Guide, I will venture to declare that the Affability, Sweetness, and Sensibility, which shone in your every Action, lead me irresistibly to Love and Admire the Mistress of them, and I account it the road to the highest Felicity, if my sincerity might in any degree meet your Approbation; as I am persuaded that is the first Principle, which can be offer’d as a foundation for the least hope of a Lady’s regard; and I must beg leave to observe, I greatly admire that Quality which yourself so justly declar’d, was most necessary in Love, I mean CONSTANCY, from which I would presume to infer, that we are naturally led from Admiration, to Imitation and Practice; All which in being permitted to declare to you—would constitute my particular happiness as far as Expression could be prevail’d on to figure the Ideas of the Mind; meanwhile I would particularly Request, you would condescend to favour me with a Line, in which I hope to hear you are well, and that you will honour us with your Company with good Mrs. Burney and Family some day next week, which that Lady is to fix; in which I trust we shall not be deny’d as ’twill not be possible to admit separating so particularly desirable a part of the Company, and as I am persuaded we are honored with your Assent to the Engagement:

I am dear Miss Fanny’s
Most sincere Admirer and very hble servant

Thos. Barlow
Burney’s diary describes a second, very awkward, meeting with Barlow at a house call a few days later.

Barlow then sent her a second letter:

Second Letter from Thomas Barlow to Fanny Burney

Madam — I have somewhere seen that powerful Deity, Cupid, and the invincible Mars, habited in a similar manner; and each have in their train several of the same disposition’d Attendants; the propriety of which Thought I own pleas’d me, for when drawn from the allegory, it is acknowledg’d, both Love and War are comparative in several particulars: they each require CONSTANCY, and the hope of Success stimulate each to Perserverance; and as the one is warm’d and encourag’d by the desire of Glory; so the other is much more profoundly fix’d and transported by the Charms of the Fair Sex: I have been told that Artifice and Deception are connected to both, but those Qualitys I shou’d determine to discard and substitute in the Place an open Frankness and undisguised Truth and Honour; and for Diligence, Assiduity, Care, and Attention, which are essential to both, and which some place in the Catalogue of the Labours of Love, I should have them happily converted to Pleasures in the honour of devoting them to Miss Fanny Burney; if the bravest General may miscarry; so the most sincere Lover may lose the wish’d-for Prize; to prevent which I shou’d continue to invoke my guardian Genius that she may ever inspire me with such Principles and Actions as may enable me to reach the summit of my Ambition, in approving myself not unworthy the Esteem of your amiable self, and not unworthy — but stop, oh, ardurous Pen and presume not (‘til in the front you can place PERMISSIONS to hope) ascending such sublime heights.

It has given me great Uneasiness that the excessive hurry of Business has so long prevented me the honour of waiting on you, and enquiring after your Welfare, which I earnestly wish to hear, but I determine, with your leave, e’er long to do myself that Pleasure, as methinks Time moves very slowly in granting me an Opportunity to declare, in some small degree (for I could not reach what I should call otherwise) how much I am, with the greatest Respect imaginable,

Dear Miss Fanny

Your most devoted and most obedient servant,

Thos. Barlow

Second excerpt from Fanny Burney’s journal, the following day

About 2 o’clock, while I was dawdling in the study, and waiting for an opportunity to speak, we heard a rap at the door and soon after John came in and said — “A
gentleman is below who asks for Miss Burney: Mr. Barlow.” I think I was never more distressed in my life — to have taken pains to avoid a private conversation so highly disagreeable to me, and at last to be forced into it at so unfavorable a juncture, for I had now two letters from him, both unanswered, and consequently open to his conjectures. I exclaimed — “Lord! How provoking! What shall I do?”

My father looked uneasy and perplexed; he said something about not being hasty, which I did not desire him to explain. Terrified lest he should hit at the advantage of an early establishment — like Mr. Crisp — quick from the study — but slow enough afterward — I went down stairs. I was my mother pass [from the front] into the back parlour, which did not add to the graciousness of my reception of poor Mr. Barlow, who I found alone in the [front] parlour. I was not sorry that none of the family were there, as I now began to seriously dread any protraction of this affair.

He came up to me with an air of tenderness, and satisfaction, began some anxious enquiries about my health; but I interrupted him with saying, — “I fancy, Sir, you have not received a letter I — I —”

[I stopt, for I could not say which I had sent!]

“A letter? — No, Ma’am!”

“You will have it, then, to-morrow, Sir.”

We were both silent for a minute or two, when he said — “In consequence I presume, Ma’am, of the one I—”

“Yes, Sir,” cried I.

“And pray — Ma’am — Miss Burney! — may I — beg to know the contents? — that is — the — the —” He could not go on.

“But if you would favour me with the contents now, I could perhaps answer it at once?”

“Sir, it requires no answer.”

A second silence ensued. I was really distressed myself to see his distress, which was very apparent. After some time he stammered out something of hoping and beseeching — which, gathering more firmness, I answered — “I am much obliged to you, Sir, for the too good opinion you are pleased to have of me — but I should be very sorry you should lose any more time upon my account — as I have no thoughts of changing my situation and abode.”

He seemed to be quite overset: having, therefore so freely explained myself, I then asked him to sit down, and began to talk of the weather. When he had a little recovered himself, he drew a chair close to me, and began making most ardent professions of respect and regard and so forth. I interrupted him as soon as I could,
and begged him to rest satisfied with my answer.

“Satisfied! repeated he, “my dear Madam — is that possible?”

“Perhaps, Sir, said I, “I ought to make some apologies for not answering your first letter — but really I was so much surprised — on so short an acquaintance.”

He then began making excuses for having written, but as to short acquaintance he owned it was a reason for me, but for him — fifty years could not have more convinced him of my etc. etc.

“You have taken a sudden, and far too partial idea of my character,” answered I. “If you look round among your older acquaintance, I doubt not but you will very soon be able to make a better choice.”

He shook his head. “I have seen, Madam, a great many ladies, it is true — but never —”

“You do me much honor,” cried I, “but I must desire you take no further trouble about me — for I have not at present the slightest thought of ever leaving this house.”

“At present?” repeated he, eagerly. “No, I would not expect it — I would not wish to precipitate — but in the future —”

“Neither now or ever, Sir,” returned I, “have I any view of changing my condition.”

“But surely, surely this can never be! so sever a resolution — you cannot mean it — it would be wronging all the world!”

“I am extremely sorry, Sir, that you did not receive my letter, because it might have saved you this trouble.”

He looked very much mortified, and said in a dejected voice — “If there is anything in me — in my connexions — or in my situation in life, which you wholly think unworthy of you — and beneath you — or if my character or disposition meet with your disapprobation — I will immediately forgo all — I will not — I would not —”

“No, indeed, Sir,” cried I, “I have neither seen or heard of anything of you that was to your disadvantage — and I have no doubts of your worthiness.”

He thanked me, and seemed reassured; but renewed his solicitations in the most urgent manner. He repeatedly begged my permission to acquaint my family of the state of his affairs, and to abide by their decision; but I would not let him say two words following upon that subject. I told him that my answer was a final one, and begged him to take it as such.

He remonstrated very earnestly: “This is the severest decision! ... Surely you must allow that the social state is what we were all meant for? — that we were created for one another? — that to form such a resolution is contrary to the design
of our being?

“All this may be true,” said I, “I have nothing to say in contradiction to it – but you know there are many odd characters in the world — and I am one of them.”

“O, no, no, no — that can never be! but is it possible that you have so bad an opinion of the Married State? It seems to me the only state for happiness!”

“Well, Sir, you are attracted to the married life — I am to the single — therefore every man in his humour — do you follow your opinion — and let me follow mine.”

“But, surely, — is not this singular?”

“I give you leave, Sir,” cried I, laughing, “to think me singular — odd — queer — nay, even whimsical, if you please.”

“But my dear Miss Burney, only —”

“I entreat you, Sir, to take my answer — you really pain me by being so urgent.”

“That would not I do for the world! I only bet you to suffer me — perhaps in future —”

“No, I shall never change — I do assure you you will find me very obstinate.”

He began to lament his own destiny. I grew extremely tired of so often saying the same thing; but I could not absolutely turn him out of the house; and, indeed, he seemed so dejected and unhappy, that I made it my study to soften my refusal as much as I could without leaving room for further expectations.

About this time my mother came in. We both rose. I was horridly provoked at my situation.

“I am only come in for a letter,” cried she, “pray don’t let me disturb you.” And away she went ...

This could not but be encouraging to him, for she was no sooner gone than he began again the same story, and seemed determined not to give up his cause. He hoped at least that I would allow him to enquire after my health?

“I must beg you, Sir, to send me no more letters.”

He seemed much hurt, and looked down in silence.

“You had better, Sir, think of me no more, if you study your own happiness —”

“I do study my own happiness — more than I have ever had any probability of doing before!”

“You have made an unfortunate choice, Sir, but you will find it easier to forget it than you imagine. You have only to suppose that I was not at Mr. Burney’s on May Day — and it was a mere chance my being there — and then you will be —”

“But if I could — could I also forget seeing you at Miss Burney’s? — and if I
did — can I forget that I see you now?”

“O yes! In three months’ time you may forget you ever saw me. You will not find it so difficult as you suppose.”

“You have heard, Ma’am, of an old man being ground young? Perhaps you believe that? But you will not deny me leave to sometimes see you?”

“My father, Sir, is seldom, hardly ever, indeed, at home.”

“I have never seen the Doctor — but I hope he would not refuse me the permission to enquire after your health? I have no wish without his consent.”

“Though I acknowledge myself to be singular I would not have you think me either affected or trifling, — and therefore I must assure you I am fixed in the answer I have given you — unalterably fixed.”

His entreaties grew now extremely distressing to me. He besought me to take more time and said it should be the study of his life to make me happy. “Allow me, my dear Miss Burney, only to hope that my future conduct —”

“I shall always think myself obliged, nay honoured by your good opinion — and you are entitled to my best wishes for your health and happiness — but, indeed, the less we meet the better.”

“What — what can I do?” cried he, very sorrowfully.

“Why — go and ponder upon this affair for about half an hour. Then say — what an odd, queer, strange creature she is — and then — think of something else.”

“O no, no! — you cannot suppose all that? I shall think of nothing else — your refusal is more pleasing than any other lady’s acceptance.”

He said this very simply, but too seriously for me to laugh at. ...

I rose and walked to the window thinking it was high time to end a conversation already much too long; and then he again began to entreat me not to be so very severe. I told him that was sure I should never alter the answer I made at first; that I was very happy at home; and not at all inclined to try my fate elsewhere. I then desired my compliments to Mrs. O’Connor and Miss Dickenson and made a reverence by way of leave taking.

“I am extremely sorry to detain you so long, Ma’am” said he, in a melancholy voice. I made no answer. He then walked about the room; and then again besought my leave to ask me how I did some other time. I absolutely, though civilly refused it, and told him frankly that, fixed as I was, it was better that we should not meet.

He then took his leave — returned back — took leave — and returned again. I now made a more formal reverence of the head at the same time expressing my good wishes for his welfare, in a sort of way that implied that I expected never to see him again. He would fain have taken a more tender leave of me — but I repulsed him with
great surprise and displeasure. I did not, however, as he was so terribly sorrowful refuse him my hand, which he had made sundry attempts to take in the course of conversation. When I withdrew it, as I did presently, I rang the bell to prevent his again returning from the door.

_Letter from Fanny Burney to Thomas Barlow, written that night_

Sir,

I am much concerned to find that my silence to the first letter with which you honoured me has not had the effect it was meant to produce, of preventing your giving yourself any further trouble on my account.

The good opinion you are pleased to express of me, however extraordinary upon so short an acquaintance, certainly claims my acknowledgements; but as I have no intention of changing my present situation, I can only assure you of my good wishes for your health and happiness, and request and desire that you will bestow no further thoughts, time, or trouble upon,

Sir,

Your most humble servant,

F. Burney

We chatted together a moment, & then I ran forward to the Coach & M. de Narbonne returned up stairs. M. D’Arblay had so much retreated, that he hardly reached me in time to help me into the Carriage. I had already taken hold of Oliver’s [the coachman] arm & the instant I was in, he began putting up the steps.

“Ah ha!” cried M. D’Arblay — & leaping over them, got into the Coach, seating himself opposite to me.

I believe Oliver’s surprise was equal to my queerness.

“Where is he to go, Ma’am?” cried he.

“To Chelsea,” I answered. — And the door was shut. — & off he drove.

I cannot pretend to recollect with any regularity what followed: the situation was so extremely embarrassing — my mind was so filled with the thoughts of my Father — & the fear of a thousand things endless to name — that I wholly forget how & in what way our journey began — I only know he wished to speak of all I wished not to hear, from my dread of further involvement . . .

[After some conversation in the coach]

“But! but! but! If I could — if it were not forbidden — to speak — to that Person — as I would like to ask — or not — as long as I get some answer — if it is necessary to spend some time every year in London — with her friends — or if it is necessary to always stay in the country — at Mickelham — to make her happy!]

I can give you no idea of the emotion into which he worked himself in saying these last words. — I was obliged to make him no answer at all, but say something quite foreign —

“Mais! mais! he cried a little impatiently laissez moi parler! laissez — permittez —”

[But! but! but! let me speak! allow — permit —]
— which I was fain to pretend not to observe — & held up his Hand folded & went on —

I begged him to say no more then quite fervently —

“Mais — enfin, cried he, pourquoi? pourquoi faut il que je me taire toûjours?”

[But then why? Why must I always be quiet.]

“O mon Dieu cried I pour tant de raisons!”

[O my God, for so many reasons!]

“Tant, repeated he, tant? in a tone not well pleased & rising & retaking his Seat — il n’y est qu’un seul qui est bon! —”

[So many, so many? There is only one good reason.]

“Et qu’est ce, donc, que cet seul raison?”

[And what is that sole reason, then?]

‘Vôtre — aversion!” cried he — Flinging himself back in the furthest corner of the Coach.

[Your — dislike!]

[More conversation. Then later]

To be sure — he kissed my Glove a few times for this! & was beginning all over again & so urgently that, at length, upon his repeated pourquoi to my supplication he would be silent, I was forced to speak — & to say this little truth — ‘Eh bien, M. D’Arblay, donc — c’est — pour VOUS — pour vous-même que je ne veux pas entendre.”

[Well, M. D’Arblay — it is — for YOU — for yourself that I do not want to hear.]

“Mais comment ça? comment?” cried he, astonished.

[But how is that? How?]

“C’est — qu’il faut que vous songez plus à ce que vous faites! — oh oui! pensez! pensez! — Songez, songez! — à ce que vous faites! à ce que vous dites!”

[It is — that you need to consider more what you are doing! — Oh yes! Think! Think! — Consider! Consider! — what you are doing! What you are saying!]

Fanny Burney to M. d’Arblay, some days before April 18, 1793

J’avais bien le dessein de vous parler — — mais vous êtes d’une vivacité à tout deranger. Pusqu’il faut que je parle, je vais le faire et très clairement.
Eh bien — j'avoue que ce n'est pas manque d'estime — ce n'est pas pas manque
de confiance — non c'est toujours pour vous que cette personne hesite et se trouve
indecise. — Elle a craint que vous ne quitassiez l'angleterre, elle voudrait que vous
y restassiez et que vous y restassiez son ami; et son dessein etait de tacher de vous
trouver quelqu'autre personne plus riche, plus belle, plus jeune, plus — plus — plus
— toute chose de bien, n'ayant rapport ni au coeur, ni à la conformité de gouts et —
car sur ces derniers articles peut etre elle ne trouverait pas facilement une personne
qui sût mieux apprecier.

[It was my intention to speak to you — — but you are quick to disturb everything.
Since I have to speak, I will do it, and very clearly.

Well — I confess that it is not from lack of esteem — it is not from lack of trust
— no, it is always for you that that person hesitates and is indecisive. She feared that
you would leave England; she wanted you to remain there and remain her friend; and
her plan was to try to find you someone else richer, more beautiful, younger, more
— more — more — more — everything good, except as relates to heart, or to the
conformity of tastes and — — because on these last articles she might not easily find
a person who knows better how to appreciate you.]

Answer from D’Arblay

Je n'ai pas besoin de reflechir longtemps pour dire à mon amie dans toute las sincerité
de mon ame: Si demain j'avais une fortune considerable, je le mettrais à ses pieds; et
je me regarderais comme le plus heureux de tous les hommes si elle consentait à la
partager, fiere de lui appartenir, je ferais mon bonheur du soin d'assurer le sien. Ce
n'est donc pas à moi a reflechir, mais à elle, uniquement à elle. Je ne possede rien,
je n'ai rien à attendre, ou du moins ce que je puis esperer est si incertain, et si peu
consequent! — — Je n'ai point demandé ce q'avait mon amie — C'est à elle à voir
si elle aura la courage de vivre retirée, et si nous serons à l'abri de besoin. Quant à
moi j'aurai toujours assez!

[I do not need to reflect long to say to my friend, with all the sincerity of my
soul: If tomorrow I had a considerable fortune, I would put it at her feet; and I would
regard myself as the happiest of all men if she would consent to share it. I would
make my happiness the care of assuring hers. So it is not for me to reflect, but for
her, only for her. I have nothing, I have nothing to expect, or at least what I can hope
for is so uncertain and so inconsequential! I didn't ask what my friend has. It is for
her to see if she has the courage to live in seclusion and if we will be safe from need.
As for me, I will always have enough.]
Answer from Burney

helas! ce qu’elle a est si peu! — c’est de la Reine seulement, qu’elle a 100 livres par an — mais cette pension n’est fondée que sur les bonté de cette Princesse. Elle a bien encore 20 livres par an qui lui restent de Cecilia: mais jusqu’a présent cette somme a été distribuée en de petites pensions. — De son Pere, elle n’ose attendre pour le present, ni peut être avant un des plus grands malheurs de sa vie puisqu’elle sait qu’se soeurs n’ont eu et n’auront rien jusques là. Enfin à cette époque cruelle, elle ne sait point qu’elle aurait — 1000 livres sterline est tout ce qu’on a promis à ses soeurs. Elle croit cependant, qu’elle pourrait avoir quelque chose que cette somme: mais jusqu’ici elle s’est si peu souciée de tout cela! Pensez — Pensez donc encore! Reflechissez, meditez, deliberez encore!

[Alas! What she has is so little! - It is from the Queen alone, that she has 100 pounds a year - but this pension is based only on the goodness of this Princess. She does have 20 pounds a year left from Cecilia, but up to now this sum has been distributed in small pensions — From her Father, she dare not expect anything for the present, nor can she, perhaps, until one of the greatest misfortunes of her life, since she knows that her sisters have had and will have nothing until then. Then at this cruel time she does not know what she will have; 1000 pounds sterling is all that was promised to her sisters. She believes, however, that she might have something more than this amount: but so far she cared so little about it! Think - Think again! Reflect, meditate, think again!]

From Burney’s journal, Thursday April 18, 1793

By the next journal entry, they had clearly become engaged — presumably in a direct conversation not recorded.

Thursday April 18.

...M. d’A. passed by the Sofa on which I was seated, & dropt a NOTE by the side of my arm. I soon unfolded it unobserved, by help of the News paper. It was dejected, but infinitely sweet, & conjuring me to tell him whether, in circumstances so perplexing & unpromising, I had no feelings of repentance for my engagement. This was a surmise I could not suffer to wound his generous delicacy an instant. I seised a scrap of paper & answerd it frankly: I put it quickly on the table; his watchful Eye saw it — & to see it, possess, & read it was the work of the same moment I used in flitting from the room.

3It had been given out as gifts to indigent relatives.
The note she passed to d’Arblay

I cannot even a moment defer answering so serious & affecting a little Letter. There are few, very few, that any where, or in any station, could have the smallest rational chance to make me happy; but whose soever’s ‘Fate I could share’ in a Palace — I most simply & solemnly protest I would share equally & most cheerfully, in every possible adversity. And never can I fear ‘Repentance’ when Confidence & Trust are built on perfect esteem.

Elizabeth Sarah Villa-Real and William Gooch

Elizabeth Sara Villa-Real (1757-1807) and William Gooch. Married 1775.

Elizabeth Sara Villa-Real was a poet and novelist. She is mostly known for her memoir, *The Life of Mrs. Gooch. Written by Herself*, from which the description of her courtship, below, is taken. She regretted the engagement even before the wedding and tried to get out of it but Gooch threatened to sue her and ruin her reputation. The marriage was unhappy and soon broke up. (There are conflicting accounts of this. The Wikipedia article states, “Her husband took control of her money and abandoned her in Lille in 1778.” However, Cynthia Pomerlau in *Resigning the Needle for the Pen: A Study of Autobiographical Writings of British Women Before 1800* [http://www.pomerleau.org/cindy/] writes, “Eventually she receives an apparently compromising note from her music teacher and, though insisting upon her innocence, endeavors unsuccessfully to conceal it from her husband. Gooch’s family determines to make public the story and separate the couple. He retains custody of the children but refuses to grant the divorce she eventually requests, thus cutting her off from the possibility of remarriage. Her uncle advises her to wait out the storm in banishment in France and she blames him rather than herself for the seduction that follows.” I have not further looked into this.) Mrs. Gooch went onto a career as an actress and writer, and to a number of affairs with aristocrats and military men.

We no sooner arrived there [Bath], than it was reported my fortune was much larger than it really was. On the first evening of my appearance (which was the first that I ever wore a woman’s dress) I danced the last minuet with Mr. Wade, to render me conspicuous. As soon at that was over, he presented Mr. Gooch to my mother and myself, introducing him to me as a partner for the evening.

The first question I asked him was, whether he were related to the pretty Miss Gooch, of whom I had heard. He replied, that she was his sister, and he should be happy to introduce her to Mrs. Hutchinson and myself the following evening, when he engaged me to dance with him again.

The next morning Mr. Gooch called at our house, and at night introduced to us Lady Gooch, his mother-in-law, and Mis Gooch, who left their names the day after.

From that time Mr. Gooch became my constant attendant, and precluded all other men the possibility of dancing with me, who attempted to engage me with probability the same views as himself. In a few days, having overheated myself with dancing, I was obliged to be let blood; this, however, did not prevent me from keeping my engagement to dance with Mr. Gooch the following evening. I did so, and my arm began to bleed afresh, which forced me to sit down for the remainder of the time, and Mr. Gooch, seating himself by me, proposed my going off with him. He represented the infinite service my health would receive from the Spa waters and expatiated much
on the gaieties and pleasures to be met with abroad. To this proposal I strongly objected. I knew his OWN family to be unexceptionable, and all that I had heard against it was that Sir Thomas was NOW married to his daughter's governess.

I wrote a card, which I gave him at the next ball, that I would by no means encourage him in a clandestine manner, but that he might make an open proposal and then be accepted. I gave him at the same time a letter, which I desired him to put in the post office; it contained a few lines I had hastily written to Mr. Charles Mellish, my uncle, desiring he would not oppose the match.

The next morning my mother received one from Sir Thomas Gooch, with proposals from himself for his son, and requested to be informed of the state of my fortune? She did not like the connection; but resolved on our immediately setting out for London to consult with the rest of my relations. We did so in the course of the following day; and at the same time all Sir Thomas Gooch's family set out for London also. Nor were these our only followers — Colonel Stafford and Mr. Lyon, two Irish gentlemen, with whom we had been acquainted at Bath, and who both had sought opportunities of addressing me, overtook us on the road: at that time, I began to think I should prefer Mr. Lyon to either of his competitors; but I was really hurried by the Gooches into this marriage, and not suffered to breathe (if I may be allowed the expression) or to consider for a moment on what I was doing. Sir Thomas, on his arrival, hired a house in Suffolk Street, and all the family became our constant visitors.

...Lady Galway appeared perfectly indifferent with regard to my marriage; not indeed did any of my family ever give themselves the trouble to mention it, excepting Mr. Charles Mellish, who once or twice told me he did not perfectly approve it, but, unfortunately for me, he did not object forcibly enough to prevent it. Had he chosen to have done so, it might have been easily accomplished; such was my opinion of my uncle, and my affection for him, that he would never have found it difficult to persuade me to any thing, and particularly where my heart was so little interested, which by this time became less every hour. The same opinion and affection I have ever retained nor is it by many the only instance of my valuing those who least care about my fate.

My uncle was probably apprized of some motives existing of which I was then ignorant, and I wish I had remained so!

Lady Gooch's maternal fondness for Mr. Gooch pleaded forcibly for his interest and she used every endeavour to hasten our marriage; it was indeed hastened, for the article were immediately drawn. I saw Mr. Gooch for the first time, on the 5th of April 1775, and we were married at St. George's, Hanover Square, the 13th of May following.

Before this fatal day I had sincerely repented my engagements. Some things that
Mr. Mellish had said to me, some remarks I had myself made, and a dislike that I had, in consequence of both these, taken to Mr. Gooch’s family, determined me of sezing the first favourable opportunity, when alone with him, of disclosing my sentiments. I did so one evening when my mother had left us together. I told him that my mind had changed, and it was my wish to break off the connection. His answer to me was, that if I did, it should be the ruin of my character, and the loss of half my fortune, for which he would sue me.
James Boswell and Margaret Montgomerie

James Boswell (1740-1795) married Margaret Montgomerie (1738?-1789) in 1769.

Margaret Montgomerie

James Boswell

Painting by George Willison, 1765

James Boswell is famous as the author of *The Life of Samuel Johnson* and *A Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*. His diaries are extremely long and detailed, and remarkable for their frankness about his sex life; he was addicted to whoring, both before and after his marriage. He met Dr. Johnson in 1763, and by 1769 was starting his not very successful career as a lawyer.

Margaret Montgomerie was a first cousin of Boswell’s. Boswell’s father, who disapproved of most things about his son, including his friendship with Johnson, disapproved the match, because she was not rich or well connected.

Writers about Boswell agree that Boswell was fortunate in his wife (the reverse is less clear). The two of them remained fundamentally in love with one another, and she remained supportive of him, despite his constant sexual infidelity, and his gradual descent into alcoholism.
Letter from James Boswell to Margaret Montgomerie

Edinburgh, 20 July 1769

My dear Cousin — I know I shall have a friendly and affectionate answer to the last letter which I wrote to you. But in the meantime, I am going to write you a calm and determined epistle, in few words, but of infinite importance to me.

You never knew till we were in Ireland that I had at different points of my life been deeply in love with you. That has, however been the case; and had not vanity or some other artificial motive made me, from time to time, encourage my fancy in other schemes, the genuine inclinations of my heart would ever have been constant to my dear Peggie Montgomerie. As it was, you know how fond I have been of you, and how I have at different times convinced me that my love for you was truly sincere. While wavering in my resolutions, I was always determined that if your happiness depended on your having me, I would not hesitate a moment to make my best friend happy. And I accordingly begged in a late letter that you would tell me freely if that was the case.

I was at the assembly last night, and saw a variety of beauties. I was not inconstant to you for a moment. Indeed, after standing the trial you did in Ireland, there could be little fear. Any other person than you would be apt to disregard what I say in my present situation. But I think I may trust to the generosity of a noble-minded woman, as Dempster calls you. I therefore make you this proposal. You know my unhappy temper. You know all my faults. It is painful to repeat them. Will you, then, knowing me fully, accept of me for your husband as I am now — not the heir of Auchenleck, but one who has had his time of the world, and is henceforth to expect no more than £100 a year? With that and the interest of your £1,060, we can live in an agreeable retirement in any part of Europe that you please. But we are to bid adieu for ever to this country. All our happiness is to be our society with each other, and our hopes of a better world. Nor ought I to be surprised if a woman of your admirable sense and high character with all who know you should refuse to comply with it, should refuse to sacrifice every prudent considerations to me. But as I love you more than I can express, you will excuse me for making this proposal. I am ready upon these terms to marry you directly. And, upon my honour, I would not propose it now, were I not fully persuaded that I would share a kingdom with you if I had it. I also solemnly promise to do everything in my power to show my gratitude and make you happy. Think seriously of this. Give me any positive answer you honestly can. But I trust on no mediocrity, no reasoning, no hesitation. Think fully, and one way or other tell me your resolution. I am much yours.

James Boswell
Margaret Montgomerie’s answer

Lainshaw, Saturday 22 July 1769

I have thought fully as you desired, and in answer to your letter I accept of your terms, and shall do everything in my power to make myself worthy of you. J.B. with £100 a year is every bit as valuable to me as if possessed of the estate of Auchinleck. I only regret the want to wealth on your account, not being certain if you can be happy without a proper share of it. Free of ambition, I prefer real happiness to the splendid appearance of it. I wish you could meet me at Glasgow on Saturday. Could you not come that length in the fly and return on Monday? Let me know and I’ll be there any day you approve.

My heart determines my choice. May the Almighty grant His blessing and protection, and we need not be afraid; His providence extends over all the earth, so that wherever you go, I shall willingly accompany you and hope to be happy. Had you been, as you mention, in your former prosperity, I should perhaps have indulged myself in female prudence, &c, but I think this is not now the time for dissimulation. I am therefore ready to meet you when you please, and to join my fate to yours. Is not this as full an answer as you could wish? Say nothing of the affair to your father, as you are sure he will never consent, and to disobey after consulting is worse than doing it without saying a word.

My heart is more at ease than it has been for a long time, though still I feel for what I’m afraid you suffer. Be assured, my dear Jamie, you have a friend that would sacrifice everything for you, who never had a wish for wealth until now, to bestow it on the man of her heart.

I wrote two letters, one on Friday and one on Tuesday. I hope the contents of neither have offended you. My anxiety about your happiness made me use every argument in my power to prevail on you to stay at home. In hopes of meeting with you soon, I shall only add that I most sincerely am, my dear Jamie, your faithful and affectionate

M.M.

William Byrd II and Lucy Parke

William Byrd II (1674-1744) and Lucy Parke (1688-1715). Married 1706.

William Byrd II was a planter in colonial Virginia, and the founder of Richmond, Virginia. He lived for ten years in London, studying law, and became a member of the Royal Society. He was an early advocate of inoculation against smallpox. He kept a detailed diary, extremely frank both about sex and about the brutalities of slavery.

Lucy Parke was a beautiful and rich young woman of 18. Her father, Daniel Parke II was governor of the Leeward Islands.

Below is a letter from Byrd to the father, proposing himself as a suitor, and a love letter from Byrd to Lucy. The florid pseudonyms he uses — Veramour (true lover) for himself, Fidelia (faithful) for Lucy — are typical of his style.

The Byrds had a difficult and quarrelsome marriage. Lucy died of smallpox in 1715.

Letter to Daniel Parke

Since my arrival in this Country I have had the hour to be acquainted with your Daughters, and was infinitely surpriz’d to find young Ladys with their accomplishments in Virginia. This surprise was soon improv’d into a Passion for the youngest
for who I have all the respect and tenderness in the world. However I think it my
duty to intreat your approbation before I proceed to give her the last testimony of
my affection. And the Young Lady her self whatever she may determine by your
consent will agree to nothing without it. If you can entertain a favorable opinion
of my person, I dont question but my fortune may be sufficient to make her happy,
especially after it has been assisted by your Bounty. If you shall vouchsafe to approve
of this undertakeing I shall indeavor to recommend my self by all the dutifull Regards
to your Excellency and all the marks of kindness to your Daughter. Nobody knows
better than your self how impatient Lovers are, and for that reason I hope youll be as
speedy as possible in your determination whihc I passionately beg may be in favour of

Yours &c.

Love letter from William Byrd II to Lucy Parke

May angels guard my dearest Fidelia and deliver her safe to my arms at our next
meeting and sure they wont refuse their protection to a creature so pure and charming
that it would be easy for them to mistake her for one of themselves. If you could but
believe how entirely you possess the empire of my heart, you would easily credit me,
when I tell you, that I can neither think nor so much as dream of any subject than the
enchanting Fidelia. You will do me wrong if you suspect that there was ever a man
created that loved with more tenderness and sincerity than I do, and I should do you
wrong if I could imagine that there ever was a nymph that deserved it better than
you. Take this for granted, and then imagine how uneasy I am like to be under the
unhappiness of your absence. Figure to yourself what tumults there will arise in my
blood, what a fluttering of the spirit, what a disorder of the pulse, what passionate
wishes, what absence of thought, and what crowding of sighs,and then imagine how
unfit I shall be for business; but returning to the dear cause of my uneasiness: O the
torture of six months’ expectation! If it must be so long and necessity will till then
interpose betwixt you and my inclinations, I must submit, though it be as unwillingly
as pride submits to superior virtue or envy to superior success. Pray think of me,
and believe that Veramour is entirely and eternally yours. Adieu. I beg you write as
soon as you receive this, and commit your letter to the same trusty hand that brings
you this.

Another Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover 1739-1741 With Letters and
Literary Exercises 1696-1726. ed. Maud H. Woodfin. Translated and collated by
Anne Murray Halkett

Anne Murray (1622-1699).
A proposal from Thomas Howard (1619-1706) was declined (1644).
A proposal from Colonel Joseph Bamfield (?-1685) was accepted but they were never married.
A proposal from Sir James Halkett (1610-1670) was accepted. Married 1656.

Anne Murray was born in 1622. Her father had a position at court. In her old age she published some religious writings to which she prefixed a short account of her life.

In 1644, Thomas Howard (1619-1706), the brother of a close friend of Anne’s, secretly courted and proposed to her. She declined the proposal but he persisted. After a little while his father, who disapproved the match, sent him away to France. He ended up marrying a richer woman and becoming Thomas Howard, 3rd Earl of Berkshire.

During the English Civil War, she became closely involved with Colonel Bamfield (or Bampfield), a strong partisan on the Royalist side. Anne was involved in the escape of James II (then the Duke of York) from imprisonment at St. James Palace. It was reported that the Colonel’s wife was dead, and he proposed to Anne. She accepted the proposal, but the marriage was postponed because of the chaos of the war. In 1650, she travelled to Scotland, to live with Royalist nobility there.

In 1652, definitive news arrived that Colonel Bamfield’s wife was alive. Immediately, Sir James Halkett (1610-1670), a knight on the Royalist side who knew her well, proposed. He had, in fact, made his romantic intentions clear earlier, but she had told him decisively that she was engaged to Bamfield. Anne initially rejected his proposal, but afterward continued close to him, and eventually accepted him. They were married in 1656.

Proposal from Thomas Howard, 1644

In the yeare 1644 I confese I was guilty of an act of disobedience, for I gave way to ye adrese of a person whom my mother, att the first time that ever hee had occation to bee conversant with mee, had absolutely discharged mee ever to allow of: And though before ever I saw him severalls did tell mee that there would bee something more than ordinary betwixt him and mee (which I believe they fudged from the great friendship betwixt his sister and mee, for wee were seldome assunder att London, and shee and I were bedfellows when shee came to my sister’s house att Charleton, where for ye most part shee staid while wee continued in the country,) yett he was halfe a yeaare in my company before I discovered anything of a particular inclination for mee more than another; and, as I was civill to him both for his owne
merit and his sister sake, so any particular civility I received from him I looked upon it as flowing from the affection hee had to his sister, and her kindness to mee. After that time, itt seemes hee was nott so much master of himselfe as to conceale itt any longer. And having never any opertunity of being alone with mee to speake himselfe, hee employed a young gentleman (whose confidentt he was in an amour betwixt him and my Lady Anne his cousin-german,) to tell mee how much hee had indeavored all this time to smother his passion, which he said began the first time that ever hee saw mee, and now was come to that height that if I did nott give him some hopes of faver he was resolved to goe back againe into France (from whence he had come when I first saw him) and turn Capucin. Though this discourse disturbed mee, yett I was a weeke or ten days before I would be persuaded so much as to heare him speake of this subject, and desired his friend to represent severall disadvantages that itt would bee to him to pursue such a designe. And, knowing that his father had sentt for him outt of France with an intention to marry him to sum rich match that might improve his fortune, itt would be high ingratitude in mee to doe anything to hinder such a designe, since his father had beene so obliging to my mother and sister as to use his Lordship’s interest with ye Parliamentt to preventt the ruine of my brother’s howse and k[in?]; butt when all I could say to him by his friend could not prevale, butt that hee grewe so ill and discontented that all the howse tooke notice, I did yield so farre to comply with his desire as to give him liberty one day when I was walking in ye gallery to come there and speake to mee. What he saide was handsome and short, butt much disordered, for hee looked pale as death, and his hande trembled when he tooke mine to lead mee, and with a great sigh said, “If I loved you lese I could say more.” I told him I could nott butt thinke myselfe much obleeged to him for his good opinion of mee, butt itt would be a higher obligation to confirme his esteeme of mee by following my advice, which I should now give him my selfe, since hee would not receave itt by his friend. I used many arguements to diswade him from pursuing what hee proposed. And, in conclusion, told him I was 2 or 3 yeare older than hee, and were there no other objection, yett that was of such weight with mee as would never lett mee allow his further adrese. “Madam, (said he,) what I love in you may well increase, butt I am sure itt can never decay.” I left arguing, and told him I would advise him to consult with his owne reason, and that would lett him see I had more respect to him in denying than in granting what with so much passion he desired.

After that hee sought, and I shunned, all opertunitys of private discourse with him; butt one day, in ye garden, his friend tooke his sister by the hand and lead her into another walke, and left him and I together: and hee, with very much seriousnese, began to tell mee that hee had observed ever since hee had discovered his affection to mee that I was more reserved and avoided all converse with him, and therefore, since hee had no hopes of my faver, hee was resolved to leave England, since he could not bee hapy in itt. And that whatever became of him that might make him displease either his father or his friends I was the occation of it, for if I would not give him hopes of marrying him hee was resolved to putt himselfe outt of a capacity of marrying
any other, and go imediately into a conventt. And that he had taken order to have post horses ready against the next day. I confese this discourse disturbed mee, for though I had had noe respect for him, his sister, or his family, yett religion was a tye upon mee to endeaver the prevention of the hazard of his soule. I looked on this as a violent passion which would nott last long, and perhaps might grow the more by beeing resisted, when as a seeming complaisance might lessen itt. I told him I was sory to have him intertaine such thoughts as could nott butt bee a ruine to him and a great affliction to all his relations, which I would willingly preventt if itt were in my power. He said itt was absolutely in my power, for if I would promise to marry him hee should esteeme himselfe the most hapy man living, and hee would waite whatever time I thought most convenientt for itt. I replied I thought it was unreasonable to urge mee to promise that which ere long hee might repentt the asking; butt this I would promise to sattisfy him, that I would not marry till I saw him first maried. Hee kist my hand upon that with as much joy as if I had confirmed to him his greatest hapinense, and said hee could desire noe more, for hee was secure I should never seen or heare of that till itt was to myselfe.

Upon this wee parted both well pleased, for hee thought hee had gained much in what I promised, and I looked upon my promise as a cure to him, butt noe inconve-
nience to myself, since I had noe inclination to marry any. And though I had, a delay in itt was the least returne I could make to soe deserving a person. Butt I deceaved myselfe by thinking this was the way to moderate his passion, for now hee gave way to itt without any restraintt, and thought himselfe soe secure of mee as if there had beene nothing to opose itt, though hee managed itt with that discretion that it was scarce visible to any within the howse; nott so much as either his sister or mine had the least suspition of it, for I had injoyned him not to lett them or any other know what his designes were, because I would not have them accesory, whatever fault might bee in the prosecution of itt.

Thus it continued till towards winter that his sister was to goe home to her father againe, and then, knowing hee would want much of the opertunity hee had to converse with mee, hee was then very importunate to have mee consent to marry him privately, which itt seems hee pleased himselfe so with the hopes of prevailing with me that he had provided a wedding ring and a minister to marry us. I was much unsattisfied with his going that lengh, and, in short, told him hee need never expect I would marry him without his father and my mother’s consent; if that could be obtained, I should willingly give him the sattisfaction hee desired, butt withoutt that I could not expect God’s blesing neither upon him nor mee, and I would doe nothing that was so certaine a way to bring ruine upon us both. Hee used many arguments from the examples of others who had practised the same, and was hapy both in their parents’ faver and in one another, butt, finding mee fixt beyond any persuasion, hee resolved to acquaint my sister with itt, and to imploy her to speake of itt to his father and my mother. Shee very unwillingly undertooke it, because shee knew itt would be a surprise to them, and very unwellcome. Butt his impertunity prevailed, and shee first
acquainted my mother with it; who was so passionately offended with the proposall that, whereas his father might have beene brought to have given his consentt (having ever had a good opinion of mee and very civil), she did so exasperate him against itt, that nothing could satisfye her but presently to putt itt to Mr.H.'s choice either presently to marry a rich cittisen’s daughter that his father hadde signed for him, or els to leave England.

Proposal from Colonel Bamfield

To bee short, affter a little time hee one day, when I was alone with him, began to tell mee that now hee was a free man hee would say that to mee what I should have never knowne while hee lived if itt had beene otherways, which was, that hee had a great respect and honour for mee since the first time hee knew mee, butt had resolved itt should die with him if hee had nott beene in a condition to declare itt withoutt doing mee prejudice, for hee hoped if hee could gaine an interest in my affection itt would nott apeare so unreasonable to marry him as others might representt itt, for if itt pleased God to restore the King, of which hee was nott yett outt of hopes, hee had a promise of beeing one of his Majesties bedchamber; and, though that should faile, yett what hee and I had together would be about eight hundred pound sterling a yeare, which, with the Lord’s blesing, might be a competency to any contentmentt minds. Hee so offten insisted on this when I had occasion to be with him that att last hee prevailed with mee, and I did consentt to his proposal, and resolved to marry him as soone as itt apeared convenientt; butt wee delayed it till wee saw how itt pleased God to determine of the King’s affaires.

Proposal from Sir James Halkett

Att last, one day when hee had beene some time with mee speaking of many variety of subjects, when I least expected itt, hee told mee hee could noe longer conceale the affection hee had for mee since the first visitt hee ever had made mee, and had resolved never to mention itt had my condittion beene the same itt was; butt now looking upon mee as free from all obligation to another, hee hoped hee might now pretend to the more faver, having formerly preferred my sattisfaction above his owne. I was much troubled att this discourse ,which hee could nott butt observe; for ye teares came in my eyes. I told him I was sencible that the civillity I had receaved from him were nott of an ordinary way of friendship, and that there was nothing in my power that I would nott doe to exprese my gratitude; butt if hee knew what disturbance any discourse like that gave mee hee would never mention itt againe, for as I never propose anything of hapinesse to myselfe in this world, so I will never make another unhappy, and in this denyall I intend to evidence my respect to you much more then if I intertained your proposall, and therfore I intreatt you, if you love
either yourselfe or mee, lett mee never heare more of itt. Butt (said hee,) I hope you will nott debarre my conversing with you. Noe, (replied I,) I will nott bee so much my owne enemy, and upon the condition you will forbeare ever to speake againe of what you now mentioned noe person shall bee wellcomer to mee, nor any will I bee willinger to serve whenever I have opertunity.” Hee said itt should bee against his will to do eanything to displease mee, butt hee would make noe promises.

[Some months later]

After this money was receaved and paid where itt was most nesesary, and that I had sattisfied all that I knew anything was due to, I wentt to London for some few days, where Sir James came to mee in order to conclude our mariage, which I could nott now in reason longer deferre, since the greatest objections I had made against itt was removed, and that I was fully convinced noe man living could doe more to deserve a wife then hee had done to obleige mee; and therfore I intended to give him myselfe, though I could secure him of nothing more, and that was my regrett that I could nott bring him a fortune as great as his affection to recumpence his long expectation.

Itt was nott withoutt many debates with myselfe that I came att last to bee determined to marry, and the most prevalentt argument that persuwaded mee to incline to itt was the extreordinary way that Sir James tooke even in silence to speake what hee thought nesesary to conceale till itt apearcd to bee fitt for avowing, and then nott to bee discouragd from all the inconveniences that threatned his pursuit was what I could nott butt looke upon as ordered by the wise and good providence of the Allmighty, whom to resist or nott make use of so good an opertunity as by his mercy was offerd to mee I thought might bee offensive to his devine Majesty, who in justice might deliver mee up to the power of such sins as might bee a punishmentt for nott making use of the offer of grace to preventt them. And this consideration beeing added to Sir Jameses worth ended the contraversy. However, lest I might have beeen mistaking, or Mr. D. Dickson in his opinion, who thought itt lawfull for mee to marry, I entred nott into that state withoutt most solemne seeking the determined will of God, which by fasting and prayer I suplicated to be evidenced to mee, either by hedging up my way with thornes that I might nott offend him, or that hee would make my way plaine before his face, and my paths righteous in his sight. And as I beged this with the fervor of my soule, so itt was with an intire resignation and resolution to bee contentt with whatever way the Lord should dispose of mee. To this I may add St Paul’s attestation, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blesed for evermore, knoweth that I lie nott.” (2 Cor. xi.31,)AFFter this day’s devotion was over, everything that I could desire in order to my mariage did so pleasingly concur to the consumation of itt, and my owne mind was so undisturbed and so freed of all kind of doubts, that with thankefullnese I receave itt as a testimonie of the Lord’s aprobation, and a presage of my future hapinese; and, blesed bee his name! I was nott disapointed of my hope.

Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick

Mary Rich (1625-1678).
Proposal from Mr. Hambletone. Rejected.

Mary Rich was born in Youghal, County Cork. Rich is well known for her great love of literature and the diaries she kept from 1666 to 1677, which included many of the current events in seventeenth-century Ireland as well as her own domestic issues.

When she was thirteen or fourteen she received a marriage proposal (for when she was of age) from a Mr. Hambletone. Her father pressured her strongly to accept it; however, she disliked Hambletone and rejected him.

When she was sixteen she received a proposal, in secret, from Charles Rich which she accepted. Her father, when he found out about it was opposed strongly, because Rich was a second son and would be poor. However, as Mary insisted, her father soon gave his consent and a dowry of seven thousand pounds, so they were married. Eventually Rich’s older brother died so he became Earl of Warwick.

I have replaced part of the account of this courtship with a short synopsis below.
Proposal from Mr. Hambletone: rejected

[When I was about thirteen or fourteen years of age, there came down to me one Mr. Hambletone, son to my Lord Clandeboyes, who was afterwards Earl of Clanbrasell, and would fain have had me for his wife. My father and his had, some years before, concluded a match between us, if we liked when we saw one another, and that I was of years of consent; and now he being returned out of France, was by his father’s command to come to my father’s, where he received from his a very kind and obliging welcome, looking upon him as his son-in-law, and designing suddenly that we should be married, and gave him leave to make his address, with a command to me to receive him as one designed to be my husband. Mr. Hambletone (possibly to obey his father) did design gaining me by a very handsome address, which he made to me, and if he did not to a very high degree dissemble, I was not displeasing to him, for he professed a great passion for me. The professions he made me of his kindness were very unacceptable to me, and though I had by him very advantageous offers made me, for point of fortune (for his estate, that was settled upon him was counted seven or eight thousand pounds a-year), yet by all his kindness to me nor that I could be brought to endure to think of having him, though my father pressed me extremely to it; my aversion for him was extraordinary, though I could give my father no satisfactory account why it was so.

This continued between us for a long time, my father shewing a very high displeasure at me for it, but though I was in much trouble about it, yet I could never be brought either by fair or foul means to it; so as my father was at last forced to break it off, to my father’s unspeakable trouble, and to my unspeakable satisfaction, for hardly in any of the troubles of my life did I feel a more sensible uneasiness than when that business was transacting. Afterwards I apparently saw a good providence of God in not letting me close with it, he was, by the rebellion in Ireland, impoverished so that he lost for a great while his whole estate, the rebels being in possession of it; which I should have liked very ill, for if I had married him it must have been for his estate’s sake, not his own, his person being highly disagreeable to me.

Proposal from Charles Rich, later Earl of Warwick, accepted

Amongst others there came one Mr. Charles Rich, second son to Robert Earl of Warwicke, who was a very cheerful, and handsome, well-bred, and fashioned person, and being good company was very acceptable to us all, and so became very intimate in our house, visiting us almost every day. [Somewhat later, he] began to think of making an address to me, [my sister Boyle] promising him all the assistance her power with me could give him to gain my affection, though she knew by attempting it she should lose my father’s and all my family, that she believed would never be brought to consent to my having any younger brother; my father’s kindness making him, as
she well knew, resolved to match me to a great fortune. At last, one day she began to acquaint me with Mr. Rich’s, as she said, great passion for me; at which I was at first much surprised, both at his having it for me, and at her telling it to me, knowing how much she hazarded by it, if I should acquaint my father with it. I confess I did not find his declaration of his kindness disagreeable to me, but the consideration of his being but a younger brother made me sadly apprehent my father’s displeasure if I should embrace any such offer, and so resolved, at that time, to give her no answer, but seemed to disbelieve his loving me at the rate she informed me he did, though I had for some time taken notice of his loving me, thought I never thought he designed trying to gain me.

After this first declaration of his esteem for me by my sister, he became a most diligent gallant to me, seeking by a most humble and respectful address to gain my heart, applying himself, when there was no other beholders in the room but my sister, to me; but if any other person came in he took no more than ordinary notice of me; but to disguise his design addressed himself much to her; and though his doing so was not well liked in our family, yet there was nothing said to him about their dislike of it; and by this way his design became unsuspected, and thus we lived for some months, in which time, by his more than ordinary humble behavior to me, he did insensibly steal away my heart, and got a greater possession of it than I knew he had. My sister, when he was forced to be absent for fear of observing eyes would so plead for him that it worked, too, very much upon me. When I began to find, myself, that my kindness for him grew and increased so much, that though I had in the time of his private address to me, many great and advantageous offers made me by my father, and that I could not with any patience endure to hear of any of them, I began with some seriousness to consider what I was engaging myself in by my kindness for Mr. Rich, for my father, I knew, would never endure me, and besides I considered my mind was too high, and I was too expensively brought up to bring myself to live contentedly with Mr. Rich’s fortune, who wuld never have, when his father was dead, above thirteen or fourteen (at the most) hundred pounds a-year. Upon these considerations I was convinced that it was time for me to give him a flat and final denial; and with this, as I thought, fixed resolution, I have laid me down in my bed to beg my sister never to name him to me more for a husband, and to tell him, from me, that I desired him never more to think of me, for I was resolved not to anger my father; but when I was upon a readiness to open my mouth to utter these words, my great kindness for him stopped it, and made me rise always without doing it, though I frequently resolved it; which convinced to me the great and full possession he had of my heart, which made me begin to give him more hopes of gaining me than before I had done, by any thing but my inducing him to come to me after he had declared to me his design in doing so, which he well knew I would never endure from any other person that had offered themselves to me.

Thus we lived for some considerable time, my duty and my reason having frequent combats within me with my passion, which at last was always victorious, though my
fear of my father’s displeasure frightened me from directly owning it to Mr. Rich; till
my sister Boyle’s taking sick of the measles (and by my lying with when she had
them, though I thought at first it might be the small-pox, I got them of her) my
kindness being then so great for her, that though of all diseases the small-pox was
that I most apprehended, yet from her I did not any thing, and would have continued
with her all her illness, had I not by my father’s absolute command been separated
into another room from her; but it was too late, for I had got from her the infection,
and presently fell most dangerously ill of the measles too, and before they came out
I was removed into another house, because my sister Dungarvan, in whose house I
was, in Long Acre, was expecting daily to be delivered, and was apprehensive of that
distemper. Mr. Rich then was much concerned for me, and his being so made him
make frequent visits to me, though my sister Boyle was absent from me, and he was
most obligingly careful of me; which as it did to a great degree heighten my passion
for him, so did it also begin to make my family, and before suspecting friends, to see
that they were by a false disguise of his kindness to my sister abused and that he had
for me, and I for him a respect which they feared was too far gone.

This made my old Lady Stafford, mother to my sister Boyle (who was a cunning
old woman, and who had been herself too much and too long versed in amours) begin
to conclude the truth, and absolutely to believe that her daughter was the great actor
in this business, and that her being confident with us, would ruin her with my father;
and therefore having some power over him, to prevent the inconveniences that would
come to her daughter, resolved to acquaint my father with Mr. Rich’s visiting me
when I had the measles, and of his continuing to do so at the Savoy — whither I was,
after my recovery, by my father’s order, removed, and where by reason of my being
newly recovered of an infectious disease, I was free from any visits. After she had with
great rage chid her daughter, and threatened her that she would acquaint my father
with it (to keep me, as she said, from ruining myself) she accordingly, in a great heat
and do it. My sister presently acquainted both Mr. Rich and me with her mother’s
resolution, and when she had Mr. Rich alone, told him if he did not that very night
prevail with me to declare my kindness for him, and to give him some assurance of
my resolution to have him, I would certainly the next day by my father be secured
from his ever speaking to me, and so he would quite lose me. This discourse did make
him resolve to do what she counselled him to; and that very night, when I was ill and
laid on my bed, she giving him an opportuning of being alone with me, and by her
care keeping any body from disturbing us; he had with me about two hours discourse,
on his knees, by my bed-side, wherein he did so handsomely express his passion
(he was pleased to say he had for me), and his fear of being by my father’s command
separated from me, that together with as many promises as any person in the world
could make, of his endeavoring to make up to me the smallness of his fortune by the
kindness he would have still to me, if I consented to be his wife; that though I can
truly say that when he kneeled down by me I was far from having resolved to own
I would have him, yet his discourse so prevailed that I consented to give him, as he
desired, leave to let his father mention it to mine; and promised him that, let him make his father say what he please, I would own it.

Thus we parted, this evening, after I had given away myself to him, and if I had not done so that night, I had been, by my father’s separating us, kept from doing it, at least for a long time. ...

[Mary Rich’s father forbade her the next day to have any visits from young men. Warwick’s father visited hers, urging him to favor the suit. Her father sent her brothers to urge her against it and to get her answer]

I made this resolute, but ill and horribly disobedient answer, that I did acknowledge a very great and particular kindness for Mr. Rich, and desired them, with my humble duty to my father, to assure him that I would not marry him without his consent, but that I was resolved not to marry any other person in the world; and that I hoped my father would be please to consent to my having Mr. Rich, to whom, I was sure, he could have no other objection, but that he was a younger brother; for he was descended from a very great and honorable family, and was in the opinion of all (as well as mine) a very deserving person, and I desired my father would be pleased to consider, I only should suffer by the smallness of his fortune, which I very contentedly chose to do, and should judge myself to be much more happy with his small one, than with the greatest without him.

Lucy Apsley and Colonel John Hutchinson

Lucy Apsley (1620-1681) and John Hutchinson (1615-1664). Married 1638.

Lucy Apsley Hutchinson was a translator and writer. She authored the first complete translation of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*. She wrote a biography of her husband *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, from which the account below is taken.

Colonel John Hutchinson was a Member of Parliament from 1648 to 1653. He fought in the Parliamentary (Roundhead) army in the English Civil war and was a signatory on the death warrant of King Charles I. After the Restoration, he was imprisoned for life, but not executed.

From *Memoirs of the life of colonel Hutchinson, publ. by J. Hutchinson. To which is prefixed The life of mrs. Hutchinson, written by herself* by Lucy Hutchinson

In the same house with him, there was a younger daughter of Sr. Allen Apsley, late lieutenant of the Tower, fabled for the practice of her lute, till the returne of her mother, who was gone into Wiltshire for the accomplishment of a treaty that had bene made some progresse in, about the marriage of her elder daughter, with a gentleman of that country, out of which my lady herself came, and where her brothers Sr. John St. John and Sr. Edward Hungerford, living in greate honor and reputation, had
invited her to a visit of them. This gentle woman, that was left in the house with Mr. Hutchinson, was a very child, her elder sister being at that time scarcely past it, but a child of such pleasantness, and vivacity of spirit, and ingenuity in the quality she practis’d, that Mr. Hutchinson took pleasure in hearing her practise, and would fall in discourse with her. She having the keys of her mother’s house, some half a mile distant, would some times ask Mr. Hutchinson, when she went over to walk along with her; one day when he was there, looking upon an odd by-shelf, in her sister’s closet, he found a few Latin books; asking whose they were, he was told they were her elder sister’s, whereupon, enquiring more after her, he began first to be sorry she was gone, before he had seen her, and gone upon such an account, that he was not likely to see her; then he grew to love to hear mention of her, and the other gentlewomen who had been her companions, used to talk much to him of her, telling him how reserved and studious she was, and other things which they esteem’d no advantage; but it so much inflam’d Mr. Hutchinson’s desire of seeing her, that he began to wonder at himself, that his heart, which had ever had such an indifferency for the most excellent of womankind, should have so strong impulses towards a stranger, he never saw; and certainly it was of the Lord, (though he perceive’d it not), who had ordain’d him, through so many various providences, to be yoke’d with her in whom he found so much satisfaction. There scarcely past any day, but some accident or some discourse still kept alive his desire of seeing this gentlewoman, although the mention of her, for the most part, was enquiries whether she had yet accomplished the marriage that was in treaty.

One day there was a great deal of company met at Mr. Coleman’s, the gentleman’s house where he tabled, to hear the music, and a certain song was sung, which had been recently set, and gave occasion to some of the company to mention an answer to it, which was in the house, and upon some of their desires read: a gentleman saying ‘twas believed that a woman in the neighbourhood had made it, it was presently enquir’d who? whereupon a gentleman, then present, who had made the first song, said, there were but two women that could be guilty of it, whereof one was a lady then among them, the other Mrs. Apsley. Mr. Hutchinson, fancying something of rationality in the sonnet, beyond the customary reach of a she-wit, although, to speak truth, it signified very little, address’d himself to the gentleman, and told him, he could scarcely believe it was a woman’s, whereupon this gentleman, who was a man of good understanding and expression, and inspire’d with some passion for her himselfe, which made him regard all her perfections through a multiplying glass, told Mr. Hutchinson, that though for civility to the rest, he entitled another lady to the song, yet he was confident it was Mrs. Apsley’s only, for she had sense above all the rest, and fell into such high praises of her, as might well have begotten those vehement desires of her acquaintance, which a strange sympathy in nature had before produc’d: another gentleman, that sate by, seconded this commendation, with such additions of praise, as he would not have given if he had known her.

Mr. Hutchinson hearing all this, sayd to the first gentleman, I cannot be at rest
till this ladie’s returne, that I may be acquainted with her; the gentleman replied, “Sir, you must not expect that, for she is of an humour she will not be acquainted with any of mankind, and however this song is stolen forth, she is the nicest creature in the world of suffering her perfections to be knowne, she shuns the converse of men as the plague, she only lives in the enioyment of herself, and has not the humanitie to communicate that happinesse to any of our sex.” “Well,” sayd Mr. Hutchinson, “but I will be acquainted with her;” and indeed the information of this reserv’d humour, pleas’d him, more then all elce he had heard, and fill’d him now with thoughts, how he should attaine the sight and knowledge of her.

While he was exercis’d in this, many days past not, but a footeboy of my lady her mothers came to young Mrs. Apsley as they were at dinner bringing newes that her mother and sister would in few dayes return; and when they enquir’d of him, whether Mrs. Apsley was married; having before bene instructed to make them believe it, he smiled, and pull’d out some bride laces, which were given at a wedding, in the house where she was, and gave them to the young gentlewoman and the gentleman’s daughter of the house, and told them Mrs. Apsley bade him tell no news, but give them those tokens, and carried the matter so, that all the companie believ’d she had been married. Mr. Hutchinson immediately turned pale as ashes, and felt a fainting to seize his spiritts, in that extraordinary manner, that finding himselfe ready to sinke att table, he was faine to pretend something had offended his stomach, and to retire from the table, into the garden, where the gentleman of the house going with him, it was not necessary for him to feigne sicknesse, for the distemper of his mind had infected his body with a cold sweate and such a dispersion of spiritt, that all the courage he could at present recollect was little enough to keep him alive. His host was very troublesome to him, and to be quitt of him he went to his chamber, saying he would lie downe.

Little did any of the company suspect the true cause of his sudden qualme, and they were all soe troubled att it, that the boy then past without further examination. When. Mr. Hutchinson was alone he began to recollect his wisdome and his reason, and to wonder att himselfe, why he should be so concern’d in an unknowne person; he then remember’d the story was told him when he came downe, and began to believe there was some magick in the place, which enchanted men out of their right sences; but it booted him not to be angrie att himselfe, nor to sett wisedome in her reprooving chaire, nor reason in her throne of councell, the sick heart could not be chid nor adviz’d into health; this anxiety of mind affected him so, that it sent him to his bed that afternoone, which indeed he tooke to entertaine his thoughts alone that night, and having fortified himselfe with resolution, he gate up the next day, but yett could not quitt himself of an extra vagant perplexitie of soule, concerning this unknowne gentle woman, which had not bene admirable in another light person, but in him, who was from his childhood so serious and so rationall in all his considerations, it was the effect of a miraculous power of providence, leading him to her that was destin’d to make his future ioy.
While she so ran in his thoughts, meeting the boy againe, he found out, upon a little stricter examination of him, that she was not married, and pleas’d himsefle in the hopes of her speedy returne, when one day, having bene invited by one of the ladies of that neighbourhood, to a noble treatement at Sion Garden, which a courtier, that was her servant, had made for her and whom she would bring, Mr. Hutchinson, Mrs. Apsley, and Mr. Coleman’s daughter were of the partie, and having spent the day in severall pleasant divertisements, att evening they were att supper, when a messenger came to tell Mrs. Apsley her mother was come. She would immediately have gone, but Mr. Hutchinson, pretending civillity to conduct her home, made her stay ’till the supper was ended, of which he eate no more, now only longing for that sight, which he had with such perplexity expected. This at length he obteined; but his heart being prepossesst with his owne fancy, was not free to discern how little there was in her to answer so greate an expectation. She was not ugly, in a carelesse riding-habitt, she had a melancholly negligence both of herselfe and others, as if she neither affected to please others, nor tooke notice of anie thing before her; yet spite of all her indiffereny, she was surpriz’d with some unusuall liking in her soule, when she saw this gentleman, who had haire, eies, shape, and countenance enough to begett love in any one at the first, and these sett of with a gracefull and generous mine, which promis’d an extraordinarie person; he was at that time, and indeed always very neatly habited, for he wore good and rich clothes, and had variety of them, and had them well suited and every way answerable, in that little thing, shewing both good iudgement and greate generosity, he equally becoming them and they him, which he wore with such unaffectednesse and such neatenesse as doe not often meete in one.

Although he had but an evening sight of her he had so long desir’d, and that at disadvantage enough for her, yett the prevailing sympathie of his soule, made him thinke all his paynes well payd, and this first did whett his desire to a second sight, which he had by accident the next day, and to his ioy found she was wholly disengag’d from that treaty, which he so much fear’d had been accomplisht; he found withall, that though she was modest, she was accostable and willing to entertaine his acquaintence. This soone past into a mutuall friendship betweene them, and though she innocently thought nothing of love, yet was she glad to have acquir’d such a friend, who had wisedome and vertue enough to be trusted with her counells, for she was then much perplext in mind; her mother and friends had a greate desire she should marry, and were displeas’d that she refus’d many offers which they thought advantageous enough; she was obedient, loath to displease them, but more herselffe, in marrying such as she could find no inclination to. The troublesome pretensions of some of the courtiers, had made her willing to trie whether she could bring her heart to her mother’s desire, but being by a secret working, which she then understood not, averted, she was troubled to returne, lest some might believe it was a secret liking of them which had caus’d her dislike of others, and being a little disturb’d with these things and melancholly, Mr. Hutchinson, appearing, as he was, a person of vertue and honor, who might be safely and advantageably conversed with, she thought
God had sent her a happy reliefe. Mr. Hutchinson, on the other side, having bene
told, and seeing how she shun’d all other men, and how civilly she entertain’d him,
believ’d that a secret power had wrought a mutuall inclination betwenee them, and
daly frequented her mother’s house, and had the opertunitie of conversing with her
in those pleasant walkes, which, at that sweete season of the spring, invited all the
neighbouring inhabitants to secke their ioyes; where, though they were never alone,
yet they had every day operlunity for converse with each other, which the rest shar’d
not in, while every one minded their owne delights.

They had not six weekes enioy’d this peace, but the young men and weomen,
who saw them allow each other that kindnesse which they did not afford commonly to
others, first began to grow ielalous and envious at it, and after to use all the mallitious
practises they could invent to breake the friendship. Among the rest, that gentle
man, who at the first had so highly commended her to Mr. Hutchinson, now began
to caution him against her, and to dissparedge her, with such subtile insinuations,
as would have ruin’d any love, lesse constant and honorable then his. The weomen,
with wittie spite, represented all her faults to him, which chiefly terminated in the
negligence of her dress and habitt, and all womanish ornaments, giving herselfe wholly
up to studie and writing. Mr. Hutchinson who had a very sharpe and pleasant witt,
retorted all their malice with such iust reproofes of their idlenesse and vanity, as
made them hate her, who, without affecting it, had so engag’d such a person in
her protection, as they with all their arts could not catch. He in the meanwhile
prosecuted his love, with so much discretion, duty, and honor, that at the length,
through many difficulties, he accomplisht his designe.

I shall passe by all the little amorous relations, which if I would take the paynes
to relate, would make a true history of a more handsome management of love then
the best romances describe: for these are to be forgotten as the vanities of youth,
not worthy mention among the greater transactions of his life. There is this only
to be recorded, that never was there a passion more ardent and lesse idolatrous; he
lov’d her better then his life, with inexpressable tendernesse and kindnesse, had a
most high obliging esteeme of her, yet still consider’d honour, religion, and duty,
avove her, nor ever suffer’d the intrusion of such a dotage as should blind him from
marking her imperfections : these he look’d upon with such an indulgent eie, as did
not abate his love and esteeme of her, while it augmented his care to blott out all
those spotts which might make her appeare lesse worthy of that respect he pay’d her;
and thus indeed he soone made her more equall to him then he found her; for she was
a very faithfull mirror, reflecting truly, though but dimmely, his owne glories upon
him, so long as he was present; but she, that was nothing before his inspection gave
her a faire figure, when he was remoov’d, was only fill’d with a darke mist, and never
could againe take in any delightfull obiect, nor returne any shining representation.
The greatest excellencie she had was the power of apprehending and the virtue of
loving his: soe as his shadow, she waited on him every where, till he was taken into
that region of light, which admitts of none, and then she vanisht into nothing. Twas
not her face he lov’d, her honor and her vertue were his mistresses, and these (like Pigmalion’s) images of his own making, for he polisht and gave forme to what he found with all the roughnesse of the quarrie about it; but meeting with a compliant subiect for his owne wise government, he found as much satisfaction as he gave, and never had occasion to number his marriage among his infelicities.

That day that the friends on both sides met to conclude the marriage, she fell sick of the small pox, which was many wayes a greate triall upon him; first her life was allmost in desperate hazard, and then the disease, for the present, made her the most deformed person that could be seene, for a great while after she recover’d; yett he was nothing troubled at it, but married compenc’d his iustice and constancy, by restoring her, though she was longer then ordinary before she recover’d, as well as before.

One thing is very observable, and worthy imitation in him; although he had as strong and violent affections for her, as ever any man had, yet he declar’d it not to her till he had acquainted first his father, and after never would make any engagement but what his love and honor bound him in, wherein he was more firme and iust then all the promisarie oaths and ties in the world could have made him, notwithstanding many powerful temptations of wealth and beauty, and other interests, that were laid before him; for his father had concluded another treaty, before he knew his son’s inclinations were this way fixt, with a party in many things much more advantageous for his famely, and more worthy of his liking: but his father was no lesse honorably indulgent to his son’s affection, then the sonne was strict in the observance of his duty, and at length, to the full content of all, the thing was accomplisht, and on the third day of July, in the yeare 1638, he was married to Mrs. Lucy Apsley, the second daughter of Sr. Allen Apsley, late lieftenant of the Tower of London, at St. Andrew’s church in Holborne.
“He took her hand and set it to his lips”
From Otto of the Silver Hand, Howard Pyle.