

MY DEAR SISTER— Your last letter arrived the day of our removal to this place. We had been prepared for the melancholy intelligence it brought us by a letter of Zachary's to Skinner written the day he left London. A previous one from Joe Langton had led me to believe the danger over for the present, and I was willing to hope that future prudence might have enabled Cornelius² naturally good constitution to have rallied, and perfected his recovery. But in his state of body relapses are so usual, and often so fatal, that the news, even though it has deeply afflicted us, did not surprise. My wife, who has seen more instances of the kind than I have had from the first, had but faint expectation of his recovery, and even on the day we left Kirkham she remarked to me that she thought she perceived his legs to be enlarged. Probably the catastrophe has been preparing for some time, and was inevitable. We ought therefore, perhaps, to be thankful that he was enabled to bear it with such patience and equanimity, and that he was surrounded by so many good kind nurses, for all of whom he had such a warm affection. I feel it as a misfortune not to have been able to join you in these last cares for our dear Cornelius, but not exactly for the reason for which you say you could have wished for my assistance. I should not have recommended persevering in any attempts to turn his thoughts into a course which they did not spontaneously fall into. For there is often attendant on bodily suffering, and also on old age, an inability to fix the mind on serious subjects, and the fruitless attempt to do it sometimes makes people unnecessarily uneasy and unhappy, from the idea that they are not in a proper state of mind, whereas, in fact, the state of the body is alone at fault. For my part I think it fortunate when the attention can be taken off from the suffering of the body by any subject that excites a little interest, and I see nothing to regret on this head. The satisfactory settlement which he had made of his affairs left his mind quite at ease on temporal subjects, and I know no one who has juster ground for comfortable hope hereafter. His life was not merely inoffensive, it was also a life of active benevolence, and though his judgment might often err in selecting the objects of his kindness, and the occasions of exerting it, yet his intentions, which are the only things worth considering, were, I believe, always pure. Often when we have laughed at the manner, a little Quixotic, in which he used to exert himself for those whom he took under his protection, one could not but venerate the disinterestedness and warmth with which he devoted himself to the cause. His faults were in a great measure the natural consequence of his misfortune, and yet few people I believe have fewer. All he had we saw, for he had no idea of concealment.

A few years, my dear sister, have reduced our family to half the number at which it had stood for near forty years, before the death of poor John, and the remainder of us are going fast down hill. Yet a few years and the reunion for which we hope will have taken place, and left the stage to the rising generation.

We have been here about four or five days, and hitherto have found ourselves comfortably and agreeably situated. We are much better lodged, our table is better filled, though not so much *a l'anglaise*, and the old lady shows a great desire to make us at home and at our ease.

We had had it hinted to us that she was very particular, and that we might very likely get into some awkward disagreement with her, but I have little fear of it. She is a very decided character, speaks freely her opinion to whoever it may be, and is one that will not suffer herself to be put upon, if the occasion calls for it. She will make a *mauvais* compliment with as much *sangfroid* as say a civil thing, but she is with all that a perfect gentlewoman, has a great deal of good sense; and makes her remarks on any little 'awkwardnesses which she remarks in the children, and sometimes also in Skinner, with great good-humour, and in a manner that one cannot be offended at. The same with little improprieties of language, so that I hope we shall all profit from her society. A few days before we came to her she told me she had heard of such and such proceedings amongst my servants, who, to say truth, had got a little the master, and desired me to explain to George that it would not be the case in her house.

She begged me, if there should be anything that was not pleasant, however trifling, to speak to her about it directly, and not let a small thing become great by neglecting it. We should then explain, and as she thought we were both sensible, rational folk, we should agree upon all points of importance. She appears pleased with the children, and tries to ingratiate herself with them. They on their side are relaxing from the, little shyness they showed at first, and are greatly pleased with the change we have made. They ramble about, and are improved in their looks since we came here.

In John there is much room for improvement, he was very much reduced by his illness, which hung about him

¹ Comprising pages 93 - 105

² Died at Kirkham, 2nd May 1816.

some time after the doctor had dropped his visits. Anne is looking well and fat again, and William looks as well as I ever saw him, but his four months' confinement to the room has tendered and weakened him a little. To return to Madame du Peyrou, with whom I know you will wish me to make you acquainted. She will be near seventy, I think, but as active and spirited, as gay and cheerful, as most women of half that age. As a proof of it she proposes to borrow Skinner's horse, and ride out sometimes with Anne. She has at present a nephew on a visit to her, a young man of about four- or five-and-twenty, but who had the misfortune to be born paralytic, and whom it was distressing to see at first. But he is so cheerful, sensible, and very well educated and informed, that he is certainly an addition to the party.

His father and sister are also expected on a visit in a short time, as is also a French gentleman, an old friend of her late husband's, with whom she expects we shall be much pleased.

Our arrangements for the children are as follows. William and Anne go into town every morning, where they pass three hours at the apartments of Mdlle. Bourgeois, which she has obligingly offered, an offer of which we were very glad to avail ourselves. They will there have lessons in music, French, geography, geometry and arithmetic, and perhaps German. We dine at two, and the afternoons they will have to themselves, with the exception of a little Latin and Greek that William and I shall amuse ourselves with, but which I daresay will be no great matter, and of an hour and half three times a week, which the drawing-master will claim, from halfpast five to seven. John runs wild for another week to recruit, when we shall send him again to the Castle at nine, from which he will return at half-past three. It will not be fair to look to him as a specimen of Pestalozzi's method, for he will only attend about half the usual hours, and, for a short time; but he will be employed, and I am in hopes the simplicity of the Castle fare will have a good effect upon him, for he has naturally a partiality for the savouries, which I have sometimes thought was the cause of the gravelly complaint to which his constitution shows a tendency. The winter, which threatened to be endless, gave way the day before we came here. No one here recollects such a winter, and by the accounts we have heard from England, France, Italy, and Germany, it seems to have been a general complaint. Since we have been here the weather has been delightful, and though the situation is not so romantic or beautiful as some on the lake of Geneva, it is very beautiful. The estate runs for about a mile along the lake. An avenue and nice gravelled road for about half the distance brings you to the house, beyond which a pleasant wood, with wild but convenient walks, continues to a brook which is the boundary, and a pretty waterfall makes an agreeable finish to the promenade.

The distance from Yverdun is about two thirds of that from Blythe to Ormskirk, and from some association of ideas, I have scarce ever spoke of Yverdun since we came here without calling it Ormskirk.

We have the town of Granson just opposite to us, an ugly town when you are in it, but seen from hence at the distance of about a mile and a half, close upon the lake, and flanked by its old castle, it very much enlivens the scene, and makes up in some measure for the want of motion on the lake. There is little trade passing – a few large flat-bottomed boats in the course of the week, and a few fishing-boats are all we see. One might have a large safe boat here for two and a half or three guineas, and a crew to manage it for half-a-crown a day, but, I have determined not to indulge the whim, as it would be occasionally an additional source of anxiety on account of the children.

The principal beauty in this neighbourhood is the river Orbe, from the town of Orbe to its source. I have been twice there. The river for five or six miles resembles the Clyde in that part of its course where the falls are winding through high perpendicular banks of limestone. From the summit of these banks the ground falls away on either side, still steep but very accessible, and agreeably wooded. There is only one fall, but it is very fine, especially when the water is high, as it was when I saw it. For about two miles from the source the high steep banks disappear, and the river meanders almost like the Forth at Stirling, through a sweet romantic valley, in the midst of which is the neat handsome village of Vallorbe. At the head of the valley the river rises up, as by enchantment, from the foot of a very high perpendicular rock, having found its way by a subterraneous course from the lake of Joux at the top of the mountain.

Skinner has been at Lausanne again for a couple of days with his friend Albert, and is highly charmed with the beauty of the situation. In a few days he goes in the same society to Geneva for a week, and seems on the whole likely to be able to give a better account of the country than I shall. My wife does not think it prudent or safe to leave the children as yet (our servant-maid having little memory or forethought, though willing enough and good-natured), and I cannot think of leaving her, as Madame du Peyrou does not speak English, nor my wife French. During the winter she had too much anxiety to be able to give her mind to any study of the kind, but for the last month she has read almost daily with Mdlle. Bourgeois. She is come into town with the children this morning to renew her studies, and as soon as I have finished my letter I shall go to fetch her home. George's proficiency in the language fills us all with surprise. We never think anything of sending him with a message, or to make an inquiry, – he sees to understand everything that is said to him, and to make himself understood. John has been a diligent

master to him, writing out verbs “regular,” and retailing in George’s room all he has himself learnt at the Castle, or in the parlour. From a passage in the former part of my letter you might perhaps suppose George had not conducted himself with moderation, but that is not the case. He has been as ever careful, economical, and attentive to my interest. But the Swiss servants, who are kept here in the most simple manner, were like hungry cattle in a poor field adjoining a luxuriant one, ill fenced off. I had not the heart to enforce the strict rule of a Swiss pin-fold, and as a few weeks of our housekeeping only remained, George shut one eye and I both. My wife was out of the scrape, having resigned her place as chief of that department. And now, my dear sister, adieu for the present. Remember us all as usual to all our kind and good relatives and friends at Kirkham, and to my Aunt Hankinson, and when you have the opportunity to my Aunt Feilden³. St. Michael’s⁴ I consider as a suburb of Kirkham. Tell my nephews that we have now here an old schoolfellow of their’s, and his family, Mr. Suard of Lancaster. He married a relation of Mrs. Strickland’s. – Adieu again, your ever affectionate brother, **THO. LANGTON.**

³ Widow of Joseph Feilden of Witton.

⁴ The Rev. Hugh Hornby, M.A., Vicar of St. Michael’s on Wyre.