

from the books in the parish church, I will reward you so handsomely, that it will make you an independent man. The miserable wretch employed as clerk in the church where they were married, will be easily bribed—the register of Geoffrey's baptism will be procured in the same parish church—possessed of these, and I will defy him to substantiate his claims to Sir Alexander's property, having carefully destroyed all the other documents which could lead to prove the legality of his title. The old gardener and his nurse must be persuaded to accompany you in your proposed emigration, as these people were the only witnesses of the marriage, and the clergyman who performed the ceremony is already dead. What do you say to my proposal? Will you accept it—or shall I employ another?

“By no means—I will thankfully undertake it—especially,” I continued laughing, ‘as it is to be the last affair of the kind in which I mean to engage.’

“This iniquitous bargain concluded, a draft for five hundred pounds was duly handed over to me, and I went down to — on my honourable mission. As my employer had anticipated, the clerk was easily bribed, and I possessed myself of the documents without any difficulty. Mary Crofton, Geoffrey's old nurse, and Michael Alzure, were easily persuaded, for good wages, to enter my service, and subsequently accompanied me to the United States. Both are since dead.

“And what became of the registers? I eagerly demanded.

“Both are in my possession,” continued Walters; ‘I never meant to destroy them. I convinced Robert Moncton, on my return to London, that I had safely deposited them in the iron chest, which contained his most important papers, together with many letters from old Mr. Rivers to his daughter, confirming and giving his consent to her marriage with Edward Moncton. Not in the least doubting my sincerity, he was perfectly satisfied that all was right, and we parted with apparent regret—he to pursue his course of villainy, and I to endeavour, for the first time in my life, to gain an honest living for my family.

“It has pleased God to bless all my endeavours to that effect—I have settled my sons and daughters in life, and am possessed of all the common comforts and luxuries that wealth can procure—still Geoffrey Moncton, and his unfortunate parents, were not forgotten; and I determined as soon as the lad should be of age, to take a voyage to England, and place in your hands, the proofs I possessed of his legitimacy. Deeply repentant for my past evil life, and abhorring Robert Moncton, as the author of most of my crimes, I am here,’ continued the old man, ‘to appear as a witness against him—and I hope, with your powerful assistance, Sir Alexander, to see the young man restored to his lawful place in society.

“Well, Sir Geoffrey, what do you say to your uncle's budget? Is not this news worth paying the postage for? I returned to the Park so elated with the result of my journey to town, that I could scarcely sympathize in the grief of my poor girl, for the death of Alice Mornington, which took place during my absence. Old Dinah is off—perhaps gone somewhat before her time, to her appointed place. It is useless your remaining longer in Devonshire, as we already possess all you want to know. It is high time you should return, and lose no time in commencing your suit against your uncle, whose character will never stand the test of this infamous exposure. My poor Madge looks ill, and old dad pines to see you again. Your affectionate friend and kinsman.

“ALEXANDER MONCTON.”

I made my kind friend, Mrs. Hepburn, read over this important letter, (the longest my uncle ever wrote) to me twice, and I felt so elated at its contents, that I fancied I could leave my bed, and commence my journey to the Park early the next morning. This was but a momentary delusion—I was too weak to sit upright, or even to hold a pen, and Mrs. Hepburn, at my earnest solicitation, wrote to Sir Alexander an account of all that had happened since my visit to Devonshire.

That night was full of restless tossings, to and fro, my mind was too much excited to sleep—I could not even think with calmness. The result was, as might have been expected, a great increase of fever, and for several days I was much worse. Nothing could be more tantalizing than this provoking relapse. A miserable presentiment of evil clouded my mind—my anxiety to write to Margaret was painfully intense, and this was a species of communication which I could not convey through the medium of another. To this unfortunate delay, I have often attributed the heavy grief of after years. Our actions are our own, our opportunities in the hand of God—I possessed the will, but lacked the physical power to perform. How can any man affirm that he has uncontrollable power over his own destiny. What power, in this instance, had I over mine? A painful week passed away, at the end of which I was able to dress myself, and sit up for a few hours every day. I lost no opportunity of writing to the dear Margaret—I informed her of my interview with Miss Lee, and laid open my whole heart to her, without reserve. Deeming myself unworthy of her love, I left all to her generosity, and I dispatched my letter with a thousand horrible misgivings as to what effect it might produce upon the sensitive mind of my little cousin. To write a long, long letter to Philip Mornington was the next duty I had to perform—but when I reflected on the delight which my communication could not fail to convey, this became not only an easy, but a delightful task.