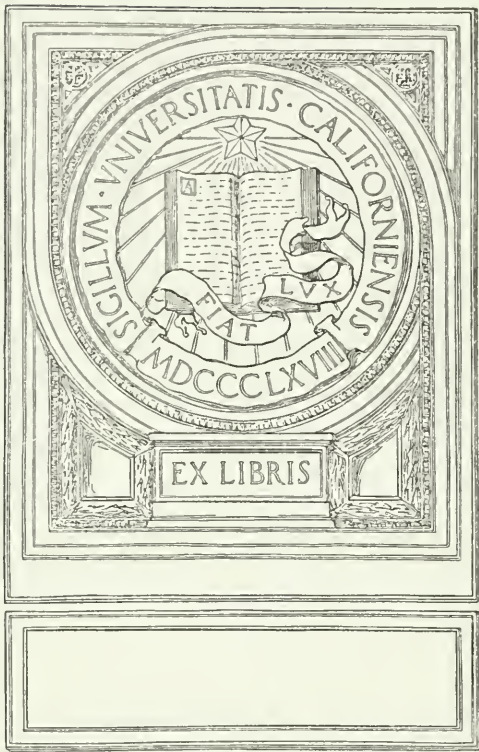


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LOVE LETTERS

OF

MRS. PIOZZI,

WRITTEN WHEN SHE WAS EIGHTY,

TO

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY.

“ ——— Written at three, four, and five o'clock [in the morning]
by an Octogenary pen; a Heart (as Mrs. Lee says) twenty-six
years old, and, as H. L. P. feels it to be, ALL YOUR OWN.”

Letter VI. 3d. Feb. 1820.

“ Too old, by Heaven!”—*Twelfth Night.*

LONDON:

JOHN RUSSELL SMITH,
4, OLD COMPTON STREET, SOHO SQUARE.

MDCCCXLIII.

LOVE LETTERS OF MRS. PIOZZI.

C. ADLARD, PRINTER, BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

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P R E F A C E.

BEFORE producing the evidence of the genuineness of the following Letters, it seems proper first to remind the reader of some of the principal incidents in the life of Mrs. Piozzi, and to give a few particulars respecting Conway.

Mrs. Piozzi's maiden name was Hester Lynch Salusbury. She was the daughter of John Salusbury, Esq. of Bodvel, in Carnarvonshire, where she was born, in 1740. She received a "classical" education, that is, she was taught Greek and Latin, of which, it seems, she had a *gentleman's* knowledge, a phrase, which, though of higher pretence, is yet understood to imply something less than a *scholar's* acquaintance. In 1763 she married Henry Thrale, Esq. an eminent brewer, of Southwark; and, in 1765, she appears to have first become acquainted with Dr. Johnson, who was introduced to Mr. Thrale by Arthur Murphy;—an introduction which, in all probability, was at least as much desired by Mrs. Thrale as by her husband; for being

both witty, and, what is called, a “blue-stocking” lady,* she was partial to the society of men of wit and learning, and Dr. Johnson was then in the meridian of his fame. Mr. and Mrs. Thrale were greatly pleased with the conversation of Dr. Johnson; and he, being no less flattered by their kindly attentions, became a frequent visitor; and at length, in 1779, took up his residence with them, apartments being fitted up for him, both in their house in Southwark and their villa at Streatham.

By the death of her husband, on the 4th May, 1781, Mrs. Thrale was left a widow, with four daughters; and from this period, from whatever cause, her friendship with Dr. Johnson began to decline: perhaps the sprightly widow might not relish the Doctor’s conversation so much as she did when a wife; and perhaps the great moralist, in giving her advice, not only as *her* friend, but as one of the executors of her late husband’s will, might speak too freely to be agreeable. In an opinion which he expressed of her, after Mr. Thrale’s decease, he said that, “if she was not the wisest woman in the world, she was undoubtedly one of the wittiest;” and it is not unlikely that the fact became more strikingly apparent to him after she had become a widow: the wit of a lady in her weeds always arrests attention more forcibly than her wisdom.

Though the friendship between Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale began to decline on the death of her husband, the

* The first printed specimen of Mrs. Thrale’s talents,—“The Three Warnings,” imitated from Fontaine, appeared in 1766, in the “Miscellanies,” published by Miss Williams, a blind lady, whom Dr. Johnson had kindly received into his house.

Doctor still continued to visit Streatham. He, however, felt that he was no longer the welcome guest of former years; and, writing in 1782, observes in a tone of regret, that he had “passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale.”

Mrs. Thrale’s last interview with Dr. Johnson was in the spring of 1783, previous to her departure for Bath, where she intended to fix her future residence. They continued to correspond for upwards of a twelvemonth after; but Dr. Johnson having written to her on the 8th July, 1784, a letter of friendly though earnest expostulation, deprecating her marriage with Piozzi,—in answer to one which he had received from her, informing him that it was irrevocably settled,—she took offence; and thus their friendship terminated. This marriage gave rise, at the time, to many facetious remarks and epigrams, the staple of which was chiefly an allusion to “Thræle’s Entire.” Dr. Johnson, on hearing that it had actually taken place, remarked, from Virgil, “varium et mutabile semper femina,”—a character which, being understood as applied to the lady individually, and not to the Sex, may mean that “*She* was always a flighty and fickle woman.” It is generally considered that some of Mrs. Piozzi’s anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, published in 1786, the year after his decease, received a little heightening in the *bearish* parts, in consequence of his disapprobation of her marriage with Piozzi; and her subsequent publication of the Doctor’s letters to her, in 1788, appears to have been intended rather to show how highly he *once* thought of her, than to increase his reputation.

Except in connexion with Dr. Johnson, what is known

of the life of Mrs. Piozzi is generally uninteresting; and though a person of considerable celebrity during the life of her first husband, and of no small note as a literary lady, during the Bozzy and Piozzi squabbles over the remains of Dr. Johnson, her personal history seemed quietly sinking into oblivion, notwithstanding the friendly endeavour to preserve it in the *Piozziana*, till the attention of the "reading world" was again recalled to it, by the recent publication of Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, which presents us with a few vivid traits of her character as the forward, clever, patronising wife, and the *not quite* broken-hearted widow of Mr. Thrale.

Shortly after her marriage with Piozzi, she proceeded with him to Florence; and during her residence there, she contributed several pieces to a work entitled the "*Florence Miscellany*,"—the joint production of "a few English of both sexes, whom chance had jumbled together at Florence, and who took a fancy to while away their time in scribbling high panegyrics on themselves, and complimentary canzonettas on two or three Italians, who understood too little of the language to be disgusted with them."*

She returned with her husband to England, in 1788; and, in the year following, published her "*Observations and Reflections made in the course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*." In 1794, appeared her "*British Synonymy*;" and in 1801 she published, in two volumes quarto, embellished with her portrait, her *greatest*

* Gifford's "*Baviad*," preface, 1791.

but least read work, entitled, “Retrospection, or, a Review of the most striking and important Events, Characters, Situations, and their Consequences, which the last 1800 years have presented to the View of Mankind.” It is *Ancient History* in dishabille, in a dimity morning gown, her slippers down in the heel, and her *front* awry; and *Modern History* in a cotton gown, and pattens, just returned from shopping, with a new cambric pocket-handkerchief, three yards of pink ribbon, a cake of Windsor soap, and an ounce of all-spice in her reticule.

On the death of Signor Piozzi, which happened in 1809, it has been said that she adopted one of his relations, to whom she intended to bequeath her property, to the injury of her own family. Whether she persevered in her intentions or not, the writer has not been able to learn; neither has he been able to ascertain in what year she first became acquainted with Mr. Conway, with whose beauteous “clay” and “majestic” figure she appears to have been as much enamoured in her old age, as she was charmed in her younger days with the mind of an “old man eloquent,” Dr. Johnson, whose body was cast in one of nature’s rudest moulds. It is not, however, probable that she was acquainted with Conway before the 4th October, 1813, the date of his first appearance in London, from the Theatre Royal, Dublin. He is mentioned in one of her letters, of the 4th May, 1818, given in the *Piozziana*;* and, from

* “Mr. Conway had a flaming night of it.”—*Piozziana*; or, *Recollections of the late Mrs. Piozzi*, by a Friend, 1833. This is the only notice of Conway which occurs in the *Work*; the compiler of which must either have been

the warmth of her attachment in 1819-20, as expressed in the following letters, it may be conjectured that the flame had not then been long kindled. She died at Clifton, on the 2d May, 1821, in the eighty-second year of her age.

Perhaps no other woman ever left behind her, in her own writing, such indisputable evidence of a green old age, as is afforded by the following letters. She seems to have retained till her eightieth year her bodily as well as her mental activity; for, as we learn from the account, printed in the *Piozziana*, of her fête, given at the Lower Assembly Rooms, Bath, on the 27th January, 1820, two days before the date of the fourth of those letters, "Her flow of disciplined animation seemed inexhaustible, and her strength equally so; for she had previously opened the ball with Sir John Salusbury, and danced with astonishing elasticity."

William Augustus Conway, the gentleman to whom those letters were addressed, was of respectable family, a circumstance to which Mrs. Piozzi alludes in letter 5th, when noticing "*la grossièreté de la conduit de Mademoiselle*,"—probably "Mrs. Stratton's eldest granddaughter," from whom it would seem that he had asked some token of remembrance. He made his first appearance on the London stage, at Covent Garden, on the 4th of October,

ignorant of Mrs. Piozzi's attachment to Conway, or have been careful to conceal it. Mrs. Piozzi seems to have been extremely reserved in speaking of her *loves*, to her friends. In the "*Piozziana*," there are no anecdotes of Thrale, Piozzi, or Conway. To her friends she appeared only intellectual: not a word of the "clay."

1813,* as has already been observed, in the character of Alexander, in the tragedy of Alexander the Great. In the course of the same season he played Othello, Jaffier, Romeo, Henry V., Coriolanus, and other characters, in the first line of tragedy, and was favorably received. Subsequently, however, he declined in popular estimation; the successful career of Kean, who made his first appearance at Drury Lane on the 26th January, 1814, threw him into the shade as a first-rate tragedian. His handsome face and noble figure, though producing a favorable impression when first seen, were insufficient to secure him a permanent reputation. His “beauteous clay” was not animated by the fire of genius; and too high an opinion of his own qualifications, probably founded on a consciousness of the beauty of his person and encouraged by the flattery of female admirers, appears to have caused him to neglect the true means of deserving approbation as a candidate for popular favour. On Miss O’Neil’s appearance, he frequently played Romeo and Jaffier to her Juliet and Belvidera, but without adding to his reputation: in such parts it was generally remarked how *tall* he was,—a tolerably certain indication that he was not great: the figure was conspicuous, but the genius which made Mrs. Pritchard appear “genteel, and Garrick six feet high,” was wanting: had he possessed it, his height would not have been so apparent. “Mr. Conway,” says a gen-

* Miss Stephens, now Countess of Essex, made her “first appearance on any stage,” at the same theatre, as Mandane, in the opera of Artaxerxes, but a few days before, and “was received by every part of the audience with the most rapturous and enthusiastic applause.”

tleman who had frequently seen him in his principal characters, "like many other *artistes*, seems to have mistaken a love of his art for ability, and consequently soon sank in public opinion, the press being inimical to him. His performance of Romeo to Miss O'Neil's Juliet, his chief character, was *almost* respectable, but nothing more; his youth and beauty were its all. He failed to touch the heart. He was, beyond doubt, one of the most Apollo or Adonis-looking men ever created; he was full six feet high, and his face, of the most manly beauty, corresponded with his incomparable figure." Such was the person who in his twenty-seventh year appears to have captivated Mrs. Piozzi, heart and soul, and to have inspired the Sibyl of four-score with the feelings of a Sappho of twenty-six:

" 'Twas this deprived my soul of rest,
 And raised such tumults in my breast;
 For while I gazed, in transport lost,
 My breath was gone, my voice was lost."

From 1817 to 1821, his engagements appear to have been chiefly at provincial theatres. In the latter year he appeared at the Haymarket as Lord Townley in the *Provoked Husband*, and as Irwin in *Every One has His Fault*; but though his performance of both characters was favorably spoken of at the time, he had ceased to attract. Disgusted both with town and country, which would not receive him at his own estimate, he went to America on a theatrical speculation, but there met with no better success. The press was unfavorable to him, and persecuted him with gibes and sneers, which are worse to bear, by a

person who has too high a conceit of himself, than sober, though severe criticism. His mind, which was more like that of a sensitive sentimental lady, than of a man, sank under the storm of paper pellets; from an actor he became a devotee, and applied himself to the study of theology with the view to taking orders. His despondency, however, increased; and in a voyage from New York to Charleston, he threw himself overboard and was drowned, just as the packet was crossing the bar of Charleston, and as the other passengers were sitting down to dinner, on the 24th January, 1828. He had declined going down to dinner, telling the captain that he "should never require dinner again." He had been silent and reserved during the passage; speaking to no one, but always acknowledging attentions or civilities with politeness and gratitude. Though the weather was exceedingly inclement at the time, his dress was thin summer clothing, as if he were insensible to the severity of the cold. The body was recovered; his gold watch and money were found in his pockets; and in his pocket-book was a bill of exchange indorsed to his mother. His melancholy fate, which it is impossible not to deplore, may serve as a warning to all young men who aspire to fame in any profession whose object is to please the public; teaching them not to form too high an estimate of their own qualifications, nor to mistake the admiration of doating old women for the standard of public taste: if they do, their anticipations are most certain to be blighted,—and then,

"In the end there comes despondency, or madness."

His effects were brought back to New York by the captain of the packet, where they were sold for the benefit of his relatives in England. The Surrogate's warrant for the sale is dated, New York, 17th March, 1828. Among other things sold were the originals of the letters now presented to the public, and a copy of the folio edition of Young's Night Thoughts, illustrated by Blake; in which Conway had written the name of the person by whom it had been presented to him,—his "dearly attached friend, the celebrated Mrs. Piozzi." The letters were purchased by a lady of the name of Ellet, a native of Western New York, but at present residing in Virginia, and in her possession they still remain. They were shown to several persons, and were lent to a gentleman with permission to take copies, and use them as he might think fit. Of this permission he availed himself; and from his copies, which were sent to England about three months ago, this *editio princeps* of Mrs. Piozzi's love letters has been printed. That they were faithfully transcribed is authenticated by the following affidavit, which, together with the copies of the letters, is in the possession of the publisher :

"—————Maketh oath that the Seven Letters copied on these sheets are true copies made by himself from the originals, some of which had the Post Office Stamps and Marks : that they are faithfully copied in every particular, without omission or interpolation of one word or words, except the few underscored with red ink : and that these copies agree with the originals in every respect as to spelling, punctuation, capitals (whether in whole words, or initial letters in the middle of sentences,) or

passages marked emphatically by single or double dashes, separated from each other, whether between words or passages, or underneath them,—in short, that the copies are literal in every sense of the word; that the handwriting was large, clear, and distinct, apparently written with a broad-nibbed pen pressed firmly on the paper, and that the points were all marked with peculiar care, exactly in this manner , ; and of this size.”*

“Sworn before me the 14th September, 1842, at New York,

JOSEPH STRONG, Commissioner of Deeds.”

On these letters it is unnecessary to make any lengthened remarks. That Mrs. Piozzi was in love, and that she wished to be loved again by the object of her affection, is beyond doubt, if her own words have any meaning. In the sixth letter indeed, where she exhorts him to “exalt his love,” she seems most significantly, though figuratively, to invite him to bestow his love upon herself,—typified as “the flower produced in colder climates, which is sought for in old age,”—in preference to the *young* “China Rose, of no good scent or flavour,” for which he seems to have had a partiality. Of what kind her love really was, it would be needless to speculate: it certainly was extraordinary at her age, whether Platonic, or Epicurean,—of the Academy, or of the *Garden*: “*Matronæ procul hinc abite castæ.*” When she informs him that her heart was only twenty-six years old, and all his own, it can only

* Fac-similes of Mrs. Piozzi’s writing are given in the *Piozziana*, 1833; where an account will also be found of the cause of her writing so firm and distinct a hand.

be concluded that she wished him to believe that her feelings towards him were those of a loving woman of that age. While she desired, however, to persuade him of this, we would fain believe, for the honour of human nature, that she only deceived herself without convincing him.—Her scriptural and religious allusions deserve the severest reprobation: they are very much like those of a female CANTWELL, employing religion as a mask to cover her real intentions in seeking the conversion of a handsome young actor: if she were sincere in her religious admonitions, she was most certainly *doating*, in both senses of the word.

LONDON, 10th January, 1813.

LOVE LETTERS OF MRS. PIOZZI.

LETTER I.

WESTON SUPER MARE, SOMERSETSHIRE,* 1 Sept. 1819.

THREE Sundays have now elapsed since James † brought me dearest Mr. Conway's promise to write to me the very next—and were it not for the newspaper which came on Tuesday the 24 August—sending me to rest comfortable, tho' sick enough, and under the influence of laudanum—I should relapse into my former state of agonizing apprehension on your account—but that little darling Autograph round the paper was written so steady, and so completely in the old way, — — whenever I look at it my spirits

* Weston Super Mare is a sea-bathing place, about nineteen miles south-westward of Bristol. It used to be much frequented in summer by fashionable people whose usual residence was at Bath. Weston is described in a letter of Mrs. Piozzi's, at page 110 of the *Piozziana*.

† Mrs. Piozzi's footman.

revive, and Hope, (*true Pulse of Life*), ceases to *intermit*, for a while at least, — — and bids me be assured we soon shall meet again.—I really was very ill three or four days; but the Jury of Matrons who sate on my complaint acquitted the Apricots which I accused, and said they all but two, proved *an alibi*. Some of the servants who were *ill too*, found out that we had in Bessy's* absence got some mildewed tea that lay in a damp closet at the last lodging. —We are now removed to a palace—a Weston palazzino, where we propose receiving Mr. Conway — — — and the weeks are within count now. Mrs. Stratton writes to me affectionately, asking after your health and engagements, of which I know no more than little Angelo, but the Bath people say we are *sure of you*. Poor H. L. P. however, who knows that we are sure of nothing in *this* world, and that we are all of us too careless of the next — — where we might make *Sure* of every thing; can only cry; and pray for our happy meeting to *him* who first directed us to meet each other. Now praise my Powers of Recollection. I observed here a Superannuated Beauty, 15 or 20 years younger than myself or so; but sick and dropsical; her legs hanging over her shoes — — — and the People

* “Bessy” was Mrs. Piozzi's maid. It will be seen subsequently that she displayed great commiseration, as in duty bound, for the sorrows of her mistress. The jury of matrons sitting on the octogenarian lady's case, and the *alibi* of the apricots, “all but two,” are very much in the style of Dr. Monsey's anecdotes.

said she was a Methodist. There were Daughters with her — — — one approaching to pretty — — — all of different names I think, but my ears caught the word Brereton among them : and Mrs. Kemble's * 1st Husband's Face came to my mind. I asked the old Lady if there was any Relationship? Dear Madam, was her Reply— Poor William was my Brother. Now I did never see that man but twice in my Life ; once acting Jaffier, and once Prince Hal — — and his Sister says he died in 1781—so when or where I saw him, Heaven knows. — — — I remember he was awkward in his Person, and beautiful in his Countenance, and his Father or Uncle had my Maiden Name by some Accident—Owen Salusbury Brereton. Mercy on me ! what a Magic Lanthorn this World does exhibit ! — — — here one Set of Figures, then a Remove : — — — all those go away, — — now another Set of Figures, different in their Dresses, their Characters, their Employments — — —

Thus perish Friends, Years, Moments from our view,
Some mourned, some loved, *all lost* ; too many, yet too Few.

Did I not once predict that dear Mr. Conway would

* John Kemble is said to have married the widow Brereton in the expectation of receiving a large sum from a nobleman, whose daughter was in love with him.

live to an extreme old Age? Your Sibyl has always been right, and it was natural I should think so. The Oak and Cedar are said by Naturalists to take *the deepest Root* of all the Trees; and when these Fancies cross your memory Threescore Years hence, do not forget the *Old Friend* of your *Young* days, should you live to those of Methuselah; none more true, none more tender, nor more disinterested will you *Ever* find, than H. L. PIOZZI.

Cowper the Poet says, in reply to a Friend who begs pardon for writing so seldom; “Why, Sir, I infer nothing from the silence of a Correspondent but that he wishes me to be silent too.” I do not, you see, infer *that*: I keep on pelting you with Letters which tell you nothing you knew not long ago: unless it comes into my head to give Information of Old Doctor Whalley’s wife running away from him, and his fine House; and settling herself in the little Village of Freshford. Various Conjectures—all disgraceful, of course, are in circulation; and some strange Pamphlet has been written—which you perhaps have seen advertised as Letters from *Amoroso*. — — The Lady escapes Censure, but her Secession provokes strange Enquiries. You, however, and *I* can do nothing better than keep resolute Silence, remembering Scrub’s Admonition, to say nothing till there comes a Peace. Summer is gone—has left her Card, pour prendre

Congé, elegantly engraved on our hearts. Here comes the first of Autumn's three following months :

DRIPPY	SNEEZEY
NIPPY To be succeeded by Winter,	WHEEZEY
SLIPPY	FREEZEY

SHOWERY	HOPPY
Till Spring returns, BOWERY	and Summers,..... POPPY
FLOWERY	<i>as this year,</i> CROPPY.

Is not this as good as Floreal and Prairial? Messidor and Thermidor? * I think it *is*—and so thinks Mr. Brady; who stole it from me, silly Stuff as it is; and put it in his Clavis Calendaria — — — how obtained — — — Dieu le sçait—but there are worse Tricks in the world than that. Every one is looking anxiously towards London till the projected Meeting shall be past; but *I* feel much more immediately and sincerely interested in OUR OWN MEETING after such cruel Illness and Dangers, and a *Silence* that has shaken my Courage more than all the Savage Shoutings of this new fangled Reformation. — — My heart has been hoping lately to hear more of Conrad; whose dress I feel familiar with, as having admired it in the Hero of the North: This new Tragedy has perhaps

* In the reformed Calendar of the French Republic, Floréal, Prairial, Messidor, and Thermidor were the names of four newly-apportioned months, between the 19th of April and the 15th of August.

precluded our favourite Æthiop; and Mr. Pope is no longer in your Company to play the Sage. My Paper, the Courier, took notice of the burst in favor of Loyalty which your audience elicited; and I was glad Mrs. Weston got a portion of the Applause. Good Night! and God bless my dearest and most valued Friend! for whose perfect Recovery and long continued Happiness I will pray till the Post comes in:—Yes; and till Life goes out from poor H. L. P.—I would keep up my Spirits — — — as you wish me — — — and your Spirits too. *But how can I?* Send a Newspaper at least. Oh for a Breath of Intelligence, however *Short*, respecting Health and Engagements.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY, Esq.,

Post Office, Birmingham.

LETTER II.

WESTON SUPER MARE, NEAR BRISTOL,

Thursday, 7 Oct. 1819.

I WRITE—like my dearest Friend—a brief Communication; *not* to beg letters; the last $\frac{1}{2}$ * broke my heart: but to tell you that having directed mine to Mrs. Rudd, 41, Gerrard Street, I fear it will not be received safely. My Fear arises from *This*. I wrote to fine Mr. Divie Robinson, Villiers Street, in the Strand, and bade him when he sent my Stock of Wine to Bath, put $\frac{1}{2}$ a dozen Bottles of the very same in a Basket and deliver to Mrs. Rudd, 41, Gerrard Street, Soho. His clerk now writes me word she cannot be found — — — does not live there, &c. So perhaps the Postman may say so too. James does not know the people — — — nor I either; — — but they are Grand Folks, Friends to Sir James Fellowes: I have written to the Clerk again to day, and suppose you will get your little paltry present of six Bottles at least; but I am uneasy for my *Letter*, which you and your Mama went *halves* in. The Date, Wednesday 6 Oct^r. —make them ask

* In the original, the word "half" is obliterated, and the numerical sign, $\frac{1}{2}$, inserted.

for it. I wish my beloved Friend to keep his spirits up, but have enough to do on his dear Account—to keep up my own. Yet shall not the one alleviating Drop of Comfort, as you kindly call my letters ;—ever fail. Mrs. Stratton saw the horrid Paragraph inserted in the Courier* — — — she writes with all possible Tenderness, and, I really do believe, True Concern. Mr. Bunn's elegant Expressions of Friendship pleased me too. How will you get your Things from Birmingham to Bath? for Bath at last will be your home and mine: Would we were there! I grieve that Changes in Shuttleworth's Arrangements will chace you from your old haunts — — — but dont go far off your old and honored Mistress. The Storms of yesterday and to-day are *terrific*; was I happy, I should call them *Magnificent*: — — — so do our own private feelings operate on Views of Nature and of Language. Your being shut out by ill health from Fortune and from Fame is very affecting indeed. Dieu nous a donné la Santé pour lui Servir; presque personne n'a manqué d'en faire mauvais usage. Quand il envoie la maladie pour nous corriger, prions lui que sa Grace toute puissante nous rende ses châtimens salutaires. Suffer nothing that you are not *obliged* to suffer, however; we

* The following paragraph, which appeared in the Courier of the 28th September, 1819, is most likely the one alluded to: "We regret to hear that Mr. CONWAY, the actor, is in a state of dangerous illness. He has been compelled to relinquish his engagement at Birmingham, after a long confinement there, and is now in London under the care of Mr. ASTLEY COOPER."

shall get through the dusky Night, and enjoy a bright morning after all. Your Youth and Strength are in full Perfection, but 'tis on God's favour I depend for your Recovery. — — — Whose Gifts indeed are those of Youth and Strength? Body and Soul? his only. — — — — And wicked as the World is, I hope it is not necessary for the warning of others—that YOUR incomparable Talents should be shown them in a state of subjugation. My Heart assures me 'tis a momentary Chastisement; for what at last is one year out of 70—the regular life of a Common Man? Oh, There is yet much for you to do — — — much to enjoy: and many a day of Care for others,—now unthought on. ——— ——— How did I ever dream — in 1791—that fretted as I was about my own affairs; a Baby just then born—or—*not* born, should in the year 1819 take up the whole attention of H. L. P.—My Daughters, none of them were married, — — — and Sir John Salisbury, not yet in the world; which I thought every hour crumbling round me. Here am I, however, praying most fervently for your Restoration to all that makes Life desirable, and giving God thanks for the Power *he lends me* of affording solace to the finest Soul, the fairest Emanation of its Celestial Origin that ever was inclosed in human clay.—*Such* Clay! but we must all be contented to bear our Cross. — The Paschal *Lamb* — — — Type of our blessed *Saviour*; was ordered to be eaten *with bitter*

herbs : cum amaritudinibus,* and have I then, been all this while complaining? Complaining of God's favours? Pain and Death? without advice from Pain, would man be good? He will find it difficult enough, even with the help of the monitor — — — and without Death should we not be good in Vain? If it be hard for the *Rich* to go to Heaven, it must be harder for the always *Healthy*. Let us take Things as God sends them, and be thankful.— — Dear Hope,

——— A cordial innocent as strong
Man's heart at once inspirits—and serenes.

She sweetens Pains and Sorrows into Joy, and sends *me* smiling (thro' my Tears) to Rest. Good Night!—God send his Angel to watch over you, and grant us yet a happy meeting by the 20th of Octr. H. L. P.

Bath is the Place where you must seek your final Reinstatement *as you say*: Bath was the place where you sought and found a Friend.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY, Esq.,

No. 41, Gerrard Street, Soho, London.

* It seems deserving of remark that this curious expression, at least to a Latin scholar, is a literal translation of the original Hebrew, (Exodus, xiii. 8,) a language with which Mrs. Piozzi had some acquaintance. Conway, on leaving the stage, applied himself to the study of Hebrew, and had attained to a considerable knowledge of that language at the time of his decease. Can he have acquired his taste from Mrs. Piozzi?

LETTER III.*

Wednesday, 29 December, 1819.

ACCEPT, dearest Mr. Conway, of a real Christmas Pye : it will be such a nice thing for you when, coming late home, there is no time for a better supper ; but Bessy begs you will not *try* to eat the crust : it will keep for weeks this *weather*. The Fleece should be a Golden one, had I the magic powers of Medea : but I do think I was Baby enough to be ashamed last night of owning I had not Three Pounds in the House, except *Your* money, laid by for my Benefit Ticket, which shall be *replaced* before that day comes — — — because the Manager's Box resembles Proserpine's bough, in Virgil ; where *Uno avulso non deficit alter*. Farewell ! our happy days are

* This, and the following letters, appear to have been written at Bath, Conway being there at the same time, on a theatrical engagement.

marked most Classically with *White*,* you see. — — —
What a delightful one was yesterday for your really
obliged, as faithful H. L. P.

Send back the waistcoats if they dont suit ; and we will
change them for unmade-up Stuff. No Letters returned
from No. 13.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY, Esq.

* The ground was covered with snow.

LETTER IV.

29 Jan. 1820.

HALF-DEAD Bessy,—more concerned at what I feel for *you*, than what she feels for herself; brings this note. Mrs. Pennington* left me in real Affliction; and if she found no Billet at the Elephant and Castle, directed to her from King's Mead, will carry home a half-broken Heart. Let my Maid see you, for Mercy's Sake. — — — 'Lord, Ma'am,' said She, 'why, if Mr. Conway was at Birmingham *you would send me*; and now he is only Three Streets off,—GO I WILL — — if I die upon the Road, rather than see you swallowing down Agony, and saying nothing but *how well you are*, to everybody, when I know you are wretched,—beyond telling.'

(*Written outside.*)

Instead of Bessy, James goes; but let him at least *see* and *speak* to you.

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY, Esq.,
No 5, King's Mead Terrace.

* Mrs. Pennington, of Clifton, was an intimate friend of Mrs. Piozzi's. She is frequently mentioned in Anna Seward's Correspondence as the "beautiful and agreeable Sophia Weston."—*Piozziana*.

LETTER V.

Midnight of the 2d, and Early Morning of the 3d Feb. 1820.

I WOULD not hurry you for the World — — — Take your own Time, and do it your own way; or rather suffer Nature to do it — — — that has done so much for you: more, I *do* think, than for any mortal Man. See what a Scar the *Surgeon*, however skilful, would have made in that beautiful Neck, while Nature's preparation, thro' *previous Agony*, made suppurating Ease come on *unfelt*; and the wound heals almost without a Cicatrix — — — does it not??? So will it be with the mind: — — — my own hasty Folly — — and my "*Violent Love outran the Pauser Reason.*" Whilst I am advising my beloved Patient, however, to *turn* the Torrent of his Fancy toward the past occurrences of human Life; the Dear pathetic Letter now in my Bosom—forced me on the same method this forenoon, when my Heart really sunk at the Thought of such coarse conduct — — la Grossierete de la Conduit

de Mademoiselle par egard a votre Famille (Superieure a la Siemie des DEUX cotès — — — Je scais ce que je dis;) me fait fremer. Nor could I conceive how you could *wish* for a Remembrance — — — they did well to deny it — — no Honour *could* result to *them* from Recollection of such behaviour. We shall meet at Mrs. Eckersall's *this* Evening—for 'tis now Two o'clock, and I solemnly promise to command—as you bid me—both Tongue and Eye.—Who I wonder was that Tall Man I met at my last Party! his Aspect shocked and haunted me like a Spectre — — — so apparently Majestic in Misfortune. The Master of the house was pointing *me* out to him — — — as if to win his attention, but no look, no smile ensued. He was not *like* you, except his lofty carriage — — — Yet I kept *on* thinking—so will my Conway stand when next I see him. It was an odd Feel; and your distress presented itself so forcibly to my imagination at the moment, that my Mind instinctively understood—
ALL WAS INDEED OVER.

That nothing should strike my fancy at Dorset Fellowes's, I played at Loo, and lost my Money. He called on you, he says, and Mrs. Eckersall made kind Enquiries — — very *kind*. Her son has been to King's Mead Terrace too: Every one loves you — — — Bessy *cries*; but begs me not to lose *my* life between my scorn of your Tormentors, and Tenderness for your Health. I was

unwell *to-day*, meaning Tuesday, and poor Fellie was too sick to make one, even of their own Family Party.

Morning, Thursday, 3d Feb. I have had some sleep; and am now on my knees giving God Thanks for the power he has lent to *you*, to resolve against Sinful Dissipation. Oh spare the Soul which HE thus deigns to preserve; Oh keep that Person pure, which his good Spirit will one Day inhabit—throwing a Radiance round. Accept my best Acknowledgments for having *promised* me so sweetly that you would try to rise superior to *all* low Desires.

Nor doubt those pious Wishes to obtain;
Since but to *wish* more Virtue, is to gain.

We see Pleasure often represented as a beautiful Lake covered with Flowers — — — but the Gratification of mere Appetite among Coarse Females, is a Pitfall covered with Weeds. Such grovelling Dispositions are well wondered at by Rousseau, who says, “Ils sont tres contents ces Messieurs là quand ils peuvent cueillir d’une *Bouche* affamie les Tendres Baisers de L’Amour.”—Shun all such mad Companions, dearest Conway. They are *Erect* in Stature, prone in Appetite; Patrons of Pleasure, posting into Pain. Keep your fine Intellects clear, and use them rightly; Improve the Talents committed to your Trust; and love your anxious trembling tender Parent; your

more than Mother, as you kindly call your affectionate
H. L. PIOZZI.

Do not stir out : do not tempt Heaven — — or Heaven's
King, who by your abscess has *saved* your precious life so
prayed for by poor H. L. P. — read Pennington's Letter
and mine to Her; and send it to the Post.—I tear open
my Letter to say the present King* is in immediate
Danger of Death—Inflammation on the Lungs in conse-
quence of this same Cold which is killing Bessy, and has
killed the Duke of Kent.†

* George IV.

† The Duke of Kent died at Sidmouth, on the 23d January, 1820. George III.
died on the 29th January; and on the 1st February the following bulletin
respecting the dangerous illness of his successor was issued from Carlton
House. "The King has been attacked with inflammation of the lungs. We
hope a favorable impression has been made on the complaint; but his Majesty
still continues severely indisposed. WILLIAM KNIGHTON. MATTHEW JOHN
TIERNEY."

LETTER VI.

Thursday Night, 3 Feb. 1820.

I CAME away as early as I could—but 'tis 11 o'clock, so I will go to bed that Bessy may believe me asleep: and try to rest herself,—poor Thing! Now however, I rise to say how the Evening at Eckersall's passed off. Mrs. Stratton and her *eldest* Granddaughter came early; so I returned their Salutation much as usual — — only refusing the Hands *I could* not touch — — — and talked with Mr. Fuller about ancient Thebes, its hundred Gates, &c. The young Lady's airy manner — — — such as you describe rightly, contrasting with your own cruel Situation — — — quite *shocked* me.—No crying, no cast down Looks, no Whimpering, as last year — — changeful as the weather or the wind, she seems at perfect Ease — — Mrs. Stratton *not* so: — — Waddling up to me in the Course of the Night, she said she wanted Talk with me:—Impossible, was the Reply — — — *My* Life is spent in such

a crowd of late: — — — ‘but on a particular Subject, Mrs. Piozzi:’ — — — ‘Lord Ma’am who can talk on particular Subjects in an Assembly Room? And the King ill beside!’ — — — So there it ended: and for *me* there it *shall* end. You and your Favorite have changed Characters. ’Tis not a year and quarter since dear Conway, accepting of my Portrait sent to Birmingham, said to the Bringer — — — ‘Oh if *your Lady* but retains her Friendship: Oh if I can but keep *her* Patronage — — — I care not for the rest.’ — — — And now, when that Friendship follows you thro’ Sickness and thro’ Sorrow; now that her Patronage is daily rising in Importance:—upon a Lock of Hair given — — — or refused by une petite Traitresse, hangs all the happiness of my once high spirited and high-blooded Friend. Let it not be so. EXALT THY LOVE: DEJECTED HEART — — and rise superior to such narrow minds. Do not however fancy she will ever be punished in the way you mention: no, no; she’ll wither on the thorny stem, dropping the faded and ungathered leaves: — a China Rose, of no good Scent or Flavour — — — false in apparent Sweetness, deceitful when depended on — — — unlike the Flower produced in colder climates, which is sought for in old Age, preserved *even after Death*, a lasting and an elegant Perfume, — — — a Medicine, too, for those whose shattered nerves require *Astringent Remedies*. And now, Dear Sir, let me request of you

— — — to love yourself — — — and to reflect on the necessity of not dwelling on any *particular subject* too long, or too intensely. It is really very dangerous to the Health of Body and Soul. Besides that our Time here is but short; a mere Preface to the great Book of Eternity: and 'tis scarce worthy of a reasonable Being not to keep the End of human Existence *so far* in View that we may tend to it — — — either directly or obliquely in every step. This is Preaching — — — but remember how the Sermon is written at three, four, and five o'clock by an Octogenary pen — — a Heart (as Mrs. Lee says) 26 years old: and as H. L. P. feels it to be;—ALL YOUR OWN. — — — Suffer your dear noble self to be in some measure benefited by the Talents which are left *me*; Your health to be restored by soothing consolations while *I remain here*, and am able to bestow them.—All is not lost yet — — You *have* a friend, and that Friend is PIOZZI.

I must go to bed. That Booby, James, not dreaming how things stood; waked my poor—perhaps unrefreshed correspondent yesterday; I was extremely sorry, and now beg your Pardon for helping to torment him whom I would die to serve — — and desire to *live* only that I *may* serve. — — — There was much talk at Dorset Fellowes's about the true *Falernian* wine, of which accept a Bottle: 'Tis a rarity; I likewise send a Partridge. Miss Williams

was right, Miss Wroughton asked kindly for you last night, said Mr. Hicks would cure you, &c. &c. The Courtneys all enquired for MY CONWAY, — — — all who seek favor from me, ask for you. All *but* — —

WILLIAM AUGUSTUS CONWAY, Esq.,

No. 5, King's Mead Terrace.

LETTER VII.

Late o' Monday Night, 28 Feb. 1820.

I WAS happy to see my Dear Friend's handwriting, as soon as I came home, and the Tickets. I must certainly have another Box secured in my name if you have no Objection. You see by the enclosed how they will insist on coming to what they call *my Places*. My Welch Friends however have more Wit. Mr. and Mrs. Lutwyche gave me Two Bank notes for Two Tickets, and they must have Front Seats in the next Loge to where I sit myself. Mrs. Stratton and I have had our Talk: the result is to *Me* a Proof that your Happiness has on this occasion been Heaven's peculiar Care. Her last words to me when we were interrupted—were—'If you *do* love Mr. Conway, dearest Madam, teach him to *despise* her.' 'Tell him so yourself,' said I—'after the 11 of March: but let us not shake his shattered nerves till then, my own can hardly bear the Conversation — — — for tho' I thought her false

and unfeeling, my Belief could not stretch itself to what you inform me now: nor will my mind be easy till he is *Assured* of her unworthiness either by your Hand or Tongue.' Est il possible? is all my Wit could suggest in answer to her story.—Fuller and Brandt are gone; There were no Proposals of Marriage made.—She will fade like the China Rose, as I said she would — — — and so let her. — Come in the Morning. — — — You will Sleep better to night, you will indeed, than either Mrs. Stratton will, who has endured *such* insults; or her whose Indignation swallows every other sense—except that of her affectionate and all subduing Admiration of *You*. H. L. P.

Our Canvass goes on triumphantly: let us think of nothing else.—The Young Lady is quite happy in *her* Emancipation, it seems. Pray let us be happy too.

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‘Whoso buyeth anything,
Hit is hys ant his offsprynge.’

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‘Helle gates y come now to,
And y wole that heo* un do
Wer ys now this gateward?
Me thuncketh he is a coward.’

The ‘gateward,’ or porter of hell, runs away, saying,

‘Ich have herd wordes stronge,
Ne dar y her no lengore stonde;
Kepe the gates whoso may
Y lete them stonde ant renne away.’

The Saviour binds Satan in hell ‘till that come domesday,’ and apparently without any resistance: he is then received by Adam, Eve, Abraham, David, St. John the Baptist, and Moses. Adam says,

‘Welcome louerd† god of londe
Godes sone ant godes sonde‡
Welcome louerd mote thou be
That thou wolt us come and se.’

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* They.

† Lord.

‡ Messenger.

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