

Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673)

Letters from scholarly contacts



The collection of *Letters & Poems* (1678) also contains three letters to Cavendish by Walter Charleton, one letter by Kenelm Digby, one by Thomas Hobbes, and one by Henry More. The letters are in the original order in which they were published in Sir William's *A Collection of Letters and Poems*.

Please note that the original transcription comes from the Early English Books online database. The letters were subsequently edited: the spelling and some of the grammar were modernized to make the letters more accessible and a pleasure to read.

Primary source

Cavendish, William, Duke of Newcastle, ed. 1678. *A Collection of Letters and Poems Microform / Written by Several Persons of Honour and Learning, upon Divers Important Subjects, to the late Duke and Dutchess of Newcastle*. London: Printed by Langly Curtis in Goat Yard on Ludgate Hill.

Reference

Hutton, Sarah. 2004. *Anne Conway: a Woman Philosopher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Item 29: 9 June 1657, Kenelm Digby to Cavendish, p. 65

Madam,

The worthy present which your Excellency hath been pleased to make me by Mr. Slaughter, has stricken me into new admiration of your goodness and knowledge. The first, that you are pleased to retain so obliging a memory of a person that can no ways merit so huge a favour: and for the second, every page in your excellent book, affordes abundant matter. I think my self exceeding happy that I live in the age which is blessed with the presence of so brave a person as you are, madam; who as you are the ornament of this, will be the envy of all

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future ones. But your excellency loves as little to hear your own praises, as you do much to deserve the greatest. Therefore I will not adventure upon that impossible task, but shall reduce myself into my own orbe of humility and thankfulness, for this great honour you have been pleased to do me, assuring your Excellency with all, that you could not have deigned it to any man living, who is more than I am,

Paris, June 9. 1657.

Madam, your Excellencies most humble and most obedient servant, Kenelme Digby.

Postscript:

I crave leave of your Excellency, that I may present here my most humble and obliged respects, to my noble Lord, my Lord Marquis your husband.

Item 32: 9 February 1661, Thomas Hobbes to Cavendish, pp. 67-68

Madam,

I have received, from your Excellence, the book you sent me by Mr. Benoist; which obliges me to trouble you with a short expression of my thanks, and of the sense I have of your extraordinary favour. For tokens of this kind are not ordinarily sent but to such as pretend to the title as well as to the mind of friends. I have already read so much of it (in that book which my Lord of Devonshire has) as to give your Excellence an account of it thus far, that it is filled throughout with more and truer ideas of virtue and honour than any book of morality I have read. And if some comique writer, by conversation with ill people, have been able to present vices upon the stage more ridiculously and immodestly, by which they take their rabble, I reckon that amongst your praises. For that which most pleases lewd spectators is nothing but subtle cheating or filch, which a high and noble mind imbued with virtue from its infancy can never come to the knowledge of. I rest

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Febr. 9. 1661.

Your Excellencies most humble servant Thomas Hobbes.

Item 47: 9 June, no year, Henry More to Cavendish, pp. 90-91

Note: This letter is probably from 1666, given the extant correspondence between More and Conway; see Hutton (2004, 114).

Madam,

I was very much surprised when your servant saluted me from so illustrious a personage; but when he produced those noble volumes as an intended testimony of your Ladyship's respect, the unexpectedness of so great an honour made me suspect the messenger of a mistake, and that he presented me with what was meant fitter for the College, or at least to some more worthy and considerable person than myself. But he persisting still in the same story, my doubts were swallowed up into admiration of your Ladyship's singular and unparalleled goodness; which seems to me to be corival with the excellency of your wit, and to seek an equal share of glory in searching out objects of such condescending acts of civility, and bounty, in these obscure corners of academical retirement, as the other in piercing into the greatest difficulties and the most dark and abstruse recesses of philosophy. Madam I humbly crave pardon for my boldness, and impatience that I offer so hastily to return thanks for so eminent a favour, before I have well computed the value thereof, nor as yet fitly polished and adorned my style, by a longer converse with your Ladyship's most elegant and ingenious writings. But the cause of defects in this kind being so freely confessed, your noble candor will be pleased to accept the rude reality of those speedy acknowledgements made by

C.C.C. June 9.

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Thrice-excellent Madam, your Ladyship's most humble and thankful admirer,
Henry More.

Item 48: 3rd May 1663, Walter Charleton to Cavendish, pp. 91-93

Madam,

In you, the world hath an illustrious example of the truth of their opinion, who hold, that no virtue is single, but always accompanied with some (if not all) of its fellows. For (to omit those many other virtues, which seem to contend each with other, which shall render you conspicuous) to that general charity of yours, whereby you daily oblige all mankind, in supplying the poverty of their understandings with the spiritual alms of knowledge; you have added an extraordinary generosity, by enriching with your choice volumes, the libraries of some particular persons, whom you are pleased to think capable of comprehending your curious speculations therein contained. And in the number of these your bounty hath given me a right to account myself. For which eminent grace and favour while I strive to show my self grateful, I find my faculties wholly taken up with admiration: and that reason I should make use of, to help me express my sentiments decently, is dimmed with the glories of the person to whom I address, if, therefore, I am not able to acquit myself of that duty, as I ought; you are to reflect on the exceeding difficulty of it. Justice requires, you should pardon the effects of that transport and astonishment, of which your Excellencies are the cause: and when I cannot advance the due tribute of thanks, you ought to admit my homage of acknowledgements. Your wit, madam, is above all commendations; your industry above belief; your labours, in writing, above humane patience; your curiosity above imitation; your notions above any, but your own subtlety; and all above your sex. Your collections by the improvement they receive from your fertile brain, become your own productions: and those obscure hints delivered to you in the discourses of others, by passing through your lightsome imagination, are turned into bright and full discoveries. You solve problems with more ease than others have proposed them: and your pen hath

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this particular advantage, that it leaves no darkness on the paper besides that of the ink. Where you treat of arguments formerly handled by others, you either give them more light, or contract what they had before into a narrower and more familiar compass; and upon all occasions you either produce new things, or speak old ones after a new manner; so that you stagger the truth of that saying of the wise man, that nothing is new under the sun. Your expressions for the most part are natural, yet select; at once explaining and adorning your matter: and they who read your books with design to be informed in points of philosophy, find themselves at the same time introduced also in rhetorique. In a word; while you bring reasons for the most admirable works of nature, you shew your self to be her greatest miracle: and your prodigious sagacity inclines even the envious to believe, that all you need do to comprehend the most obstruse things, is only to think on them.

This language, madam, is but the imperfect echo of your merits; nor can any thing, but your modesty, hinder you from owning it so to be. However, I most humbly beseech you to hear it, as most proper to that high honour and veneration due to you from,

London, May 3. 1663.

Most incomparable Madam, your Excellencies most humble servant, Walt.
Charleton.

Item 59: 7th May 1667, Walter Charleton to Cavendish, pp. 108-119

To the incomparable Princess, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle

Madam,

Among many other things, by which your Grace is pleased to distinguish yourself from other writers, this seems to be not the least remarkable; that whereas they employ only their wit, labour, and time, in composing books, you bestow also great sums of money in printing yours: and not content to enrich our heads alone, with your rare notions, you go higher, and adorn our libraries, with your

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elegant volumes. To that general charity, which disposes you to benefit all mankind, you have added a singular bounty, whereby you oblige particular persons: and out of a nobleness peculiar to your nature, you cause your munificence to rival your industry.

This, madam, among many other your excellencies, gratitude commands me to acknowledge; your grace having been pleased to number me among those, whom you vouchsafed to honour with such extraordinary presents. For which I know not how to show myself duly thankful, otherwise than by celebrating your generosity, and returning you some account of the good effects they wrought in me, while I perused them. Which considering the noble end for which you wrote them, and my inability to make you a more proportionate retribution; will not, I hope, be unacceptable to you. To this purpose, therefore, I am bold to send your Grace this rude paper. Which yet I design, not as a panegyric of your worth (for what affects us with admiration, strikes us also with dumbness: and stars are best discerned by their own lustre) but as a short scheme of my own grateful sentiments. And if I be not so happy, to deliver them in language agreeable to the dignity of the subject, I humbly beseech you to consider, that such occasions offer themselves very rarely; and that nothing is more difficult, than to make the pen observe decorum, where reason is put into disorder, justice, Madam, requires you should pardon the effects of that astonishment, whereof your wonders are the cause.

They tell us, that the end of all books is either profit, or pleasure: but I think that distinction (as many other in the schools) might well be spared: because, in truth, profit supposes pleasure; and pleasure is the greatest profit; nor am I ashamed to profess, that in all my reading I have no other aim but pleasure. It will not then, I hope, madam, be thought derogatory to the profitableness of your Grace's books, if I acknowledge myself to have received very great pleasure in reading them. And this pleasure was so charming, it so far transported me, as often to make me wish, you might never entertain a resolution of causing your works to be translated into any other language: that so all ingenious foreigners, invited by the fame of your most delightful writings, might be brought to do honour to the English tongue, by learning it on purpose to understand them. For I am

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zealous for the reputation of my native language, and of so communicative a temper, as to desire all men should participate of what I find delectable. Besides, I could not but remember, that I had known a great man of our nation, who studied Italian, only to acquaint himself with the mathematics of Galileo, in his *Del Movimento*, and *Saggiatore*; and Spanish, merely out of love to the incomparable history of Don Quixote: and was thereupon the more apt to promise myself that your Grace's works, no less admirable in their kind, than either of those, would have the like influence upon some of the *bons esprits* beyond sea. But this, Madam, was only my wish: it is not now my counsel. Should I here particularly recount to you, what the things were, that raised this so great delight in me, I should both offend by prolixity, and tacitly cast disparagement upon the rest. For,

pauperis est, numerare pecus,
he is but poor, who can account his wealth:

And what the witty roman stoic said of the excellent sayings of Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus and other princes of that sect, may be conveniently accommodated to the delightful remarks every where occurring in your books, viz. that no choice can be made, where all things are equally eminent. However, because there is no satisfaction in generals, and that order is necessary to plainness: give me leave to divide my text into three parts, your natural philosophy, your morals, and your poetry.

For your natural philosophy; it is ingenious and free, and may be, for ought I know, excellent: but give me leave, madam, to confess, I have not yet been so happy, as to discover much therein that's apodictical, or wherein I think myself much obliged to acquiesce. But, that may be the the fault of my own dull brain: and oracles have been after found true, that were at first dark and enigmatical. Again I am somewhat slow of belief also; a continual seeker: as conceiving, I have too much cause to be of Seneca's opinion, that men may, indeed enquire and determine what is most probable, but God alone knows what's true, in the things of nature. Nor am I single in this sceptical judgement. The Royal Society itself (the tribunal of philosophical doctrines) is of a

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constitution exceedingly strict and rigid in the examination of theories concerning nature; no respecter of persons or authorities, where verity is concerned; seldom, or never yielding assent without full conviction: and that's the reason why it made choice of these three words for its motto, *nullius in verba*.

This Madam, can be no discredit to your philosophy in particular, because common to all others: and he is a bold man, who dares to exempt the physics of Aristotle himself, or of Democritus, or Epicurus, or Descartes, or Mr. Hobbes, or any other hitherto known. For my part, seriously, I should be loath to affirm, that they are any other but ingenious comments of men's wits upon the dark and inexplicable text of the world; plausible conjectures at best; and no less different, perhaps, from the true history of nature, than romances are from the true actions of heroes. Nor will I adventure to determine, which of the two, Aristotle or your Grace, hath given us the best definition of the humane soul: he, when he calls it entelechia; or you when you say, it is a supernatural something, &c. So difficult is it to make a judgement of what seems incomprehensible.

Nor are you to be discouraged, Madam, if your philosophy have not the fate to be publicly read in all universities of Europe, as your grace, doubtless out of a most heroic ambition to benefit mankind, desires it should. For, while men are men, there will be different interests, and consequently different opinions: nor is the multitude of followers a certain sign of the soundness, but of the gainfulness of any doctrine. If, therefore, the world, which is obstinate (you know) and governed by prejudice, will not be induced to esteem, what you think useful; the blame lies not at your door, and you ought to console your self with this reflexion; that you have sufficiently testified your good intentions, and done more than your duty, in publishing your conceptions. Besides, the *virtuosi* of our English universities have, of late years, proclaimed open war against the tyranny of dogmatizing in any art or science: and as for those of the Roman religion; there is, I fear me, but little hope, of making them your proselytes. Because those canting politicians, called school-men, having made a new and party-coloured vest for the Church, of a kind of drugget, consisting of the thrums of peripatetic philosophy, cunningly interwoven among the golden threads of the

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Christian faith; and prevailed, upon princes to make it piacular for any scholar to appear with his judgement clad in any other livery: it is not very unlikely, the professors there will soon be brought to offend their superiors, by laying aside the defence of Aristotle's maxims, to assume the patronage of new. So that in my silly conceit, as the cabbage is observed to starve the vine, if set too near: so the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and others of the same mystical tribe, will hinder the growth of yours, in the same ground.

For your moral philosophy (for so I take liberty to call your occasional reflections upon the actions, manners, and fortunes of men) your Grace has not, indeed tied up your pen to the laborious rules of method, or the formality of a new system in ethics: but (what is as well) you have opportunely, and under various heads, dispersed many useful remarks, concerning prudence, as well civil, as domestic, in most of your writings. And this, it may be presumed, you were pleased to do, not for want of skill to reduce your rules of life into the order of dependence and connexion; but with design, to shew your plenty, and surprise your readers with good counsel even where they least expect it. You chose rather to regale us with delicate fictions, under the veil whereof wholesome instructions are neatly contrived, than to embarrass and tire us with the observation of a long train of precepts, which are never so effectual, as when naturally flowing from agreeable instances and examples: your very interludes contain advices, and your digressions are seasonably instructive: like wise husbandsmen, you plant fruit-trees in your hedge-rows, and set strawberries and raspberries among your roses and lillies. This, madam, is a piece of no small art, though not obvious to common eyes: and if any dislike the course you have taken in thus scattering and disguising your morals; I would have him asked this question, whether or no it be folly for a man to refuse to gather oranges and citrons, only because the trees that offer them, are not ranged in the order of Cyrus's quincunx? Or whether a nosegay be less fragrant, because plucked from flowers growing dispersedly? To all who have read your comical tales, with the same purity of mind, with which you wrote them, and are withal qualified to search into the mythology of all your imaginary dialogues: to all such, I say, it is evident, that you have drawn the images of all the virtues, on one hand, and their opposite vices, on the other, so much to the life; that men, beholding them, must be, by grateful violence,

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compelled to love the pulchritude of those, and abhor the deformity of these. Now, this, Madam, you could not have done had you not first had the ideas of all virtues within your self: it being absolutely necessary for a painter, first to conceive the form or similitude of the thing he intends to represent, in his own imagination; and then to make the resemblance according to that form. So that in strictness of truth, those pictures we call originals, are but copies, yea copies of copies: as being first drawn from the life in the phantasy, and after portrayed upon tables. Besides this, your Grace is further happy, in that the morals of your pen are clearly exemplified in those of your life; in which I have never heard any thing blamed, any thing disputed, unless whether it hath been more innocent, or more obliging. In fine, the documents of both your pen and life seem to be so good, that whoever is able to moderate his passions, and regulate his actions by them, needs not to seek further after happiness: nor need I fear to pronounce him arrived at such perfection, that it will not be easy for him to be brought to do ill, either out of weakness, or out of design.

For your poetry; therein your Grace hath more than a single advantage above others. First, your vein appears equally facile, equally free, and copious upon all occasions, in all sorts of arguments. The buskin and the sock are equally fit for your muse's legs. Your fancy is too generous to be restrained: your invention too nimble to be fettered. Hence it is, that you do not always confine your sense to verse; nor your verses to rhythm; nor your rhythm to the quantity and sounds of syllables. Your descriptions, expressions, similies, allegories, metaphors, epithets, numbers, all flow in upon you of their own accord, and in full tides: and verses stand ready minted in the treasury of your brain, as tears in some women's eyes, waiting to be called forth. So that in you is verified the doctrine of Plato, in his dialogue entitled *Io*; that poesis not a faculty proceeding from judgement, or acquired by labour and industry; but a certain divine fury, or enthusiasm, which scorning the control of reason, transports the spirit in raptures, as Jove's eagle did Ganymede, or as witches are said to be wafted above the clouds on the wings of their familiars. Which is, perhaps, the ground of that old saying, *nemo fit poeta*, no poet is made, but born so: as the rage and liberty of a poetic genius gave occasion to paint Pegasus with wings, in a flying posture, and without a bridle.

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Secondly, in your whole olio of poems, I find nothing which is not entirely your own. Like good housewives in the country, you, make a feast wholly of your own provisions: yea, even the dressing, sauces, and garniture of the dishes are your own. And were Perilius Faustinus revived (he, who out of envy to the glory of Virgil, made and published a large catalogue of his thefts from Homer and Hesiod) he could hardly discover so much as a single verse borrowed, by you, from any poet, ancient or modern. So circumspect you are to avoid being thought a plagiar, that you walk not in beaten paths, but decline even the rules and methods of your predecessors, and scorn imitation, as a kind of theft. A commendation, Madam, due to very few, perhaps to none besides yourself. As your Grace, therefore, owes all your poetry to the inspiration of your own happy genius alone; so we owe all the pleasure we are sensible of in reading your poems, to you alone. I may have many rivals in these my thankful acknowledgements, you can have no competitor in the glory of their occasions.

This double felicity is augmented by the accession of two others, no less worthy admiration. One is, that as you have made yourself an original, so are you likewise secure from being copied. You have indeed, given the world an illustrious example; but you have given what it cannot take, the example being of that height, that it is hardly attainable. You provoke our emulation, and at the same time cast us into despair. Your poetical fancies rather brave, than instruct our capacities: and by setting before our eyes things inimitable, you vex our ambition, and oblige us to an unprofitable trouble.

Another is, that you exceed all of your delicate sex, not only in this age, but in all ages past. It would puzzle the best historian to find your parallel among the most famous women: and in the monuments of the Roman greatness, even while that glorious nation held the empire as well of virtue and wit, as that of the world, I cannot meet with an heroine, to whom I dare to compare you. There are, I confess, who tell us of a noble Roman lady, one Sulpitia, who composed a history of Domitian's times, in hexametre verses, and wrote many elegant poems besides; and who hath been highly celebrated by Martial, Tibullus, Sidonius Apollinaris, and of late by Scaliger also, as an eminent pattern both of a chaste and immaculate life, and of a neat poetical wit: and once I had some thoughts of

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drawing a parallel betwixt that lady and your grace. But, upon a second examination of the particular remarks, wherein I had fancied the resemblance chiefly to consist; and a more serious review of the story of her life, and the remains of her pen, (extant among the fragments of Latin poets, and usually annexed to Petronius *arbiter* I perceived, I could not proceed in that resolution, without disadvantage on your part, by a conference so unequal; and thereupon resumed my former cogitation, that your Grace's statue ought to be placed alone, and at the upper end, in the gallery of heroic women, and upon a pedestal more advanced than the rest. We read not that nature hath been so prodigal of her choicest largesses, as to produce two Cicero's, or two Virgil's, or two Ben Johnson's: why, then, should we seek after your equal? It was their glory to be single: and it must be yours, to have no peer, for ought we know, you are the first great lady, that ever wrote so much and so much of your own: and, for ought we can divine, you will also be the last.

These, Madam, are a few of those swarms of thoughts that crowded into my unquiet head, when I proposed to myself to express some part at least of the great honour and reverence I owe your Grace. If I have so far obeyed the impulse of my gratitude and devotion, as to put them into words, and offer them to your knowledge; it was not, I assure you, out of a vain conceit, that they were answerable either to your vast merits, or to my obligations; but merely upon confidence, you would descend to exercise your goodness and candor, in receiving them as a simple recognition of both. And if I have suppressed the rest; it was out of good manners, and a due fear of farther offending your patience. I am not ignorant, Madam, that our prayers to God, and our addresses to princes ought to be short. Resigning you, therefore, to the conversation of your own more ingenious and useful thoughts, and to the tranquil fruition of those intellectual pleasures, that continually spring up in you from the virtues of your life, and the fame of your writings; I most humbly beg your favourable interpretation of what I have here weakly said, and with all submission imaginable, cast myself at your feet, as becomes

Your Grace's, just honourer, and most entirely devoted servant, Walter

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Charleton.
From my house in Covent-Garden May 7. 1667.

Item 73: 1 January 1654, Walter Charleton to Cavendish, pp. 142-149

To the Right Honourable, the Lady Margaret, Marchioness, of Newcastle.
Excellent Madam,

I well know that the generous never propose to themselves any other end of their favours, besides content, which necessarily results from the pursuance of their own noble inclinations, but only the benefit of the persons, upon whom they choose to confer them: and that therefore they usually select such subjects, whereupon to exercise their beneficence, that seem more likely to husband it, by a silent devotion, and modest acknowledgment, than to abuse it, by attempting a retribution. And this, Madam, both teaches and assures me; that though the favour you were pleased to do me, in sending me one of your admirable books, newly published, under the elegant and most accommodate title of *The Worlds Olio*; be so eminent a one, as to require from me a more significant expression of my gratitude, than either my wit, or fortune, or interest can ever be able to make: yet none can be more acceptable to you, than this, that I intend ever to continue your debtor. So much, therefore, I here solemnly profess; and most faithfully promise you, that I never will, so much as in a wish for a capacity of retaliation, profane the freedom of the obligation your goodness moved you to lay upon me.

But, not to state the particulars of my debt, at least in brief; might give you just cause to suspect, that I understand not the value of what I have received. And, therefore, I humbly ask your leave, that I may acknowledge to you, that you have highly benefited me, in my reputation, in my understanding, in my affections.

First, I say you have benefited me in my reputation; in that you have declared me capable of so singular an honour, as to be in the number of those persons, whom you thought worthy to receive so rich a present, from so noble a hand. For me to have sat among the multitude, whom your stationer invites to feast upon your

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Olio, had been proportionable enough to the degree of so ordinary a judgement, as mine: but to be among those few, whom your self had nominated for your chief guests, was a grace infinitely above my ambition.

Secondly, you have benefited my understanding; in that your philosophical fancies have furnished me with variety of such novel concepts, concerning sundry the most difficult problems in nature; as that if my memory be but faithful enough to retain them, I shall never be unprovided of somewhat that is poignant and grateful, to entertain curiosity withall: and whenever my own reason is at a loss, how to investigate the causes of some natural secret or other, I shall relieve the company with some one pleasant and unheard of conjecture of yours. So that by reading of your philosophy, I have acquired thus much of advantage; that where I cannot satisfy, I shall be sure to delight: which is somewhat more than I dare promise from any other discourses of the same title; in so much as they generally leave the mind in a kind of anxiety and regret, when ever they fail to afford it satisfaction. And, certainly, if it be (as some hold) reasonable to allow, that the fictions of poets, and romancists do usually take as strong hold of men's minds, and charm their affections as powerfully, as the most authentique narrations of historians; though the reader well understands the passages related by these, to be certain truths, and the adventures described by those, to be merely imaginary; and this, because delight is equal on both sides: if this, I say, be justifiable, that man can run but little hazard of his judgement, who shall affirm, that your supposition of faeries in the brain, and of our thoughts being their consults and suggestions; and your opinion that the faeries digging for stones in the quarries of the teeth, to repair their decayed tenements in the head, is the cause of the tooth-ache; are as worthy the hearing, as the most solid demonstrative theory of any philosopher whatever; insomuch as these may yield both as high and lasting a delight as that. I say delight as high and lasting; for, to speak my thoughts clearly, the pleasure that ariseth from the comprehension of the most perfect and laborious demonstration in geometry, I never could find, either in height or duration, much to exceed that, which I have sometime been affected withall, at the recital of a facetious poetical extravagancy, of which I had not before heard. Nor do I believe, that the raptures, and exultations of Don Quixote were much inferior to that famous one of Archimedes, which

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transported him out of himself, as well as out of the bath, into a loud exclamation, I have found it, I have found it. And the reason of this equality may be well enough thought, to consist chiefly in the unsatisfiedness of our nature, which always hurrying our minds on to novelties, causes us to put an equally cheap rate upon all things we think already in the possession of our understanding; and to value acquisition of a fresh, though perhaps useless, and absurd opinion, above the calm fruition of ancient and irregular maxims. But, this (Madam) being a paradox, ought to have more room, than can be spread in a letter, whose designed argument is thankfulness: and besides, should I adventure further, to avouch it, the same could not but much redound to my disadvantage; insomuch as it might render me suspected for something of a scholar, and consequently incapable of the honour and pleasure of sometimes attending you, and hearing your more than ingenious discourses. For as I remember, in one of your prefaces, or epistles to your readers, you have been pleased expressly to declare; that you never conversed, so much as one hour, with any philosopher, or professed scholar, in your whole life: and that, doubtless, must have proceeded from your constant aversion to such blunt company; not from your want of opportunities to hear what they could say. Because, being always educated among the noblest, and most knowing persons of our nation; you could hardly escape the conversation of the most learned in all the arts and sciences; unless you purposely withdrew your self from their society, or shut your ears against their discourses.

But, Madam, among those, who have perused your writings, I meet with a sort of infidels, who refuse to believe, that you have always preserved yourself so free from the contagion of books, and book-men. And the reason they give me, is this; that you frequently use many terms of the schools, and sometimes seem to have impeded the wings of your high-flying fancy with sundry feathers taken out of the universities, or nests of divines, philosophers, physicians, geometricians, astronomers, and the rest of the gowned tribe. For instance, of divines, when you speak of pre-destination, free will, transubstantiation, &c. Of philosophers, when you mention quantity, discrete and continued, the universal and first matter, atoms, elements, motion, dilation, and contraction, arefaction, and condensation, meteors, &c. Of physicians, when you distinguish of choler, phlegm,

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melancholy, and blood, and speak of the circulation of the blood, of ventricles in the heart and brain, of veins, arteries, and nerves, and expatiate upon fevers, apoplexies, convulsions, dropsies, and diverse other diseases, with their particular causes, symptoms, and cures: of geometricians, when you touch upon triangles, squares, circles, diameters, circumferences, centers, lines, straight and crooked, and their proportions each to other, and that invincible problem, the quadrature of the circle: of astronomers, when you speak of the horizon, meridian, equator, zodiac, ecliptic, tropics, poles of the world, and of the ecliptic, and in a manner run over the whole doctrine of the sphere, representing the model of the universe, and cast some transitory glances also upon the doctrine theoretical concerning the motions of the orbs, and planets. Nor can I, indeed, hope to dissolve the stiffness of these men's unbelief; until I shall be better able to convince them, that all these scholastical terms and notions may be brought into the world with us, and afterwards drawn forth of the soul, by solitary meditation, and the labour of one's own thoughts; and are not rather instilled into it, and impressed upon it, by often hearing, or reading the discourses of others, who profess those arts and sciences to which they belong, and for the more plain and methodical teaching whereof, they were first invented and recorded. But I fear me, while I insist thus particularly upon the reason alleged by these men, in defence of their diffidence, I may fall into the same danger, for the avoidance of which, I even now left my paradox destitute of assertion: and therefore I lay by that subject, and take up another more opportune and considerable, as to the discharge of my duty, and confessing how many ways you have obliged me.

I acknowledge, therefore, in the last place; that my affections must own you for their benefactress. For those many moral apothegms, and satirical remarks upon the manners of men and women, which you have frequently interspersed upon the leaves of your book, are so pathetically delivered, and with such vigour of proper and familiar language pressed home to the bosom of every man; as that that person must be irrecoverably lost in the darkness of vice, who does not, through them, clearly discern the lustre and amiableness of virtue, and thereupon instantly abominate his former deformities, and become your perfect proselyte. When a young, noble, beautiful, witty, and sprightly lady, one on whom all the pleasures of the world seem to be enamoured, and in throngs offer

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themselves to be accepted and commanded by her; when such an one, I say is heard to preach up temperance, abstinence, modesty, chastity, solitude, and the suppression of all irregular sensual appetites. What Sardanapalus is there, who must not blush at the memory of his vicious acts, and being convinced, that the delights of a soul, well ordered according to the rules of virtue and honour, are infinitely more charming and desirable, than the most magnified pleasures of the body, swimming in an ocean of luxury, and lasciviousness; firmly resolve with himself, thenceforth to seek for felicity, not in the short titillations and blandishments of the senses, but in the purity and constant serenity of the mind. Is it possible, that any of our ladies, should retain her pretences of Platonic love, or continue the practise of her petty arts of daubing and painting, of dissembling, medising, and detraction: after she hath once read your smart invectives against them, and solid arguments to shew, that they may all be justly suspected for bawds to procure and conceal the fruition of that pleasure, which doth not consist in the admiring conversation of souls, but in the close conjunction of bodies, and the satisfaction of that rank appetite of the flesh, commonly called lust? In a word; what sex, age, constitution, condition is there, whose most secret ulcers, the sharpness of your wit and pen hath not lanced open to the bottom; and afterward prescribed most easy and certain remedies for the cure of them? So that I may well conclude this paragraph with saying that your moral essays contain wise precepts enough in them, for the reformation of the age we live in, and that, certainly, is so bad that no man need ever fear a worse. And, now, incomparable Madam, having done my homage to you, in token of what I hold by the tenure of your wit and bounty, it remains, that I humbly beg your pardon for the rude and tedious manner of it. And that, I hope, you will grant me, when you have considered, that the devotion may be sincere, where the ceremonies are imperfect; and I have assured you, that I will never omit to pay you those dues of thanks, and constant observance, that belong to you, from me, as one whom your goodness hath made,

London, January 1. 1654.

Your eternal honourer, and faithful servant, W. Charleton.