

An illustration of two women in a room. On the left, a woman in a blue cloak stands with her back to the viewer, looking towards the right. On the right, a woman in a white dress with a large ruffled collar stands near a doorway, looking back over her shoulder. The room features a large mirror on the wall and a red pillar on the left.

# Jane Austen

## **The 4 Unabridged Early and Posthumous Novels**

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**Lady Susan  
Sense and Sensibility  
Northanger Abbey  
Persuasion**



**Jane Austen**

**The 4 Unabridged Early  
and Posthumous Novels:  
Lady Susan + Sense and  
Sensibility + Northanger  
Abbey + Persuasion**

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**LADY SUSAN**  
BY JANE AUSTEN

## **PART ONE**

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## **LETTER ONE**

### **LADY SUSAN VERNON TO MR. VERNON**

Langford, December.

My dear Brother

I can no longer refuse myself the pleasure of profiting by your kind invitation, when we last parted, of spending some weeks with you at Churchill, & therefore, if quite convenient to you & Mrs. Vernon to receive me at present, I shall hope within a few days to be introduced to a Sister whom I have so long desired to be acquainted with. My kind friends here

are most affectionately urgent with me to prolong my stay, but their hospitable & chearful dispositions lead them too much into society for my present situation & state of mind; & I impatiently look forward to the hour when I shall be admitted into your delightful retirement. I long to be made known to your dear little children, in whose hearts I shall be very eager to secure an interest. I shall soon have need for all my fortitude, as I am on the point of separation from my own daughter. The long illness of her dear Father prevented my paying her that attention which Duty & affection equally dictated, & I have too much reason to fear that the Governess to whose care I consigned her was unequal to the charge. I have therefore resolved on placing her at one of the best Private Schools in Town, where I shall have an opportunity of leaving her myself, in my way to you. I am determined, you see, not to be denied admittance at Churchill. It would indeed give me most painful sensations to know that it were not in your power to receive me.

Yr. most obliged & affec: Sister  
S. VERNON.

## **LETTER TWO**

### **LADY SUSAN VERNON TO MRS. JOHNSON**

Langford.

You were mistaken, my dear Alicia, in supposing me fixed at this place for the rest of the winter. It grieves me to say how greatly you were mistaken, for I have seldom spent three months more agreeably than those which have just flown away. At present, nothing goes smoothly; the Females of the Family are united against me. You foretold how it

would be when I first came to Langford, & Manwaring is so uncommonly pleasing that I was not without apprehensions for myself. I remember saying to myself, as I drove to the House, "I like this Man; pray Heaven no harm come of it!" But I was determined to be discreet, to bear in mind my being only four months a widow, & to be as quiet as possible: & I have been so, My dear Creature; I have admitted no one's attentions but Manwaring's. I have avoided all general flirtation whatever; I have distinguished no Creature besides, of all the Numbers resorting hither, except Sir James Martin, on whom I bestowed a little notice, in order to detach him from Miss Manwaring; but if the World could know my motive there, they would honour me. I have been called an unkind Mother, but it was the sacred impulse of maternal affection, it was the advantage of my Daughter that led me on; & if that Daughter were not the greatest simpleton on Earth, I might have been rewarded for my Exertions as I ought.

Sir James did make proposals to me for Frederica; but Frederica, who was born to be the torment of my life, chose to set herself so violently against the match that I thought it better to lay aside the scheme for the present. I have more than once repented that I did not marry him myself; & were he but one degree less contemptibly weak, I certainly should, but I must own myself rather romantic in that respect, & that Riches only will not satisfy me. The event of all this is very provoking: Sir James is gone, Maria highly incensed, & Mrs. Manwaring insupportably jealous; so jealous, in short, & so enraged against me, that, in the fury of her temper, I should not be surprised at her appealing to her Guardian, if she had the liberty of addressing him – but there your Husband stands my friend; & the kindest, most amiable action of his Life was his throwing her off forever on her Marriage. Keep up his resentment, therefore, I charge you. We are now in a sad state; no house was ever more altered: the whole family are at war, & Manwaring scarcely

dares speak to me. It is time for me to be gone; I have therefore determined on leaving them, & shall spend, I hope, a comfortable day with you in Town within this week. If I am as little in favour with Mr. Johnson as ever, you must come to me at No. 10 Wigmore Street; but I hope this may not be the case, for as Mr. Johnson, with all his faults, is a Man to whom that great word "Respectable" is always given, & I am known to be so intimate with his wife, his slighting me has an awkward Look.

I take Town in my way to that insupportable spot, a Country Village; for I am really going to Churchill. Forgive me, my dear friend, it is my last resource. Were there another place in England open to me, I would prefer it. Charles Vernon is my aversion, & I am afraid of his wife. At Churchill, however, I must remain till I have something better in view. My young Lady accompanies me to Town, where I shall deposit her under the care of Miss Summers, in Wigmore Street, till she becomes a little more reasonable. She will make good connections there, as the Girls are all of the best Families. The price is immense, & much beyond what I can ever attempt to pay.

Adieu, I will send you a line as soon as I arrive in Town. –  
Yours Ever,

S. VERNON.

### **LETTER THREE**

#### **MRS. VERNON TO LADY DE COURCY**

Churchill.

My dear Mother



I am very sorry to tell you that it will not be in our power to keep our promise of spending our Christmas with you; & we are prevented that happiness by a circumstance which is not likely to make us any amends. Lady Susan, in a letter to her Brother, has declared her intention of visiting us almost immediately – & as such a visit is in all probability merely an affair of convenience, it is impossible to conjecture its length. I was by no means prepared for such an event, nor can I now account for her Ladyship's conduct; Langford appeared so exactly the place for her in every respect, as well from the elegant & expensive stile of living there, as from her particular attachment to Mrs. Manwaring, that I was very far from expecting so speedy a distinction, tho' I always imagined from her increasing friendship for us since her Husband's death, that we should at some future period be obliged to receive her. Mr. Vernon, I think, was a great deal too kind to her when he was in Staffordshire; her behaviour to him, independent of her general Character, has been so inexcusably artful and ungenerous since our Marriage was first in agitation that no one less amiable & mild than himself could have overlooked it all; & tho', as his Brother's widow, & in narrow circumstances, it was proper to render her pecuniary assistance, I cannot help thinking his pressing invitation to her to visit us at Churchill perfectly unnecessary. Disposed, however, as he always is to think the best of every one, her display of Greif, & professions of regret, & general resolutions of prudence were sufficient to soften his heart, & make him really confide in her sincerity. But as for myself, I am still unconvinced; & plausibly as her Ladyship has now written, I cannot make up my mind till I better understand her real meaning in coming to us. You may guess, therefore, my dear Madam, with what feelings I look forward to her arrival. She will have occasion for all those attractive Powers for which she is celebrated, to gain any share of my regard; & I shall certainly endeavour to guard myself against their influence, if not accompanied by

something more substantial. She expresses a most eager desire of being acquainted with me, & makes very gracious mention of my children, but I am not quite weak enough to suppose a woman who has behaved with inattention if not unkindness to her own child, should be attached to any of mine. Miss Vernon is to be placed at a school in Town before her Mother comes to us, which I am glad of, for her sake & my own. It must be to her advantage to be separated from her Mother, & a girl of sixteen who has received so wretched an education could not be a very desirable companion here. Reginald has long wished, I know, to see the captivating Lady Susan, & we shall depend on his joining our party soon. I am glad to hear that my Father continues so well; & am, with best Love, &c.,

CATH. VERNON.

## **LETTER FOUR**

### **MR. DE COURCY TO MRS. VERNON**

Parklands.

My dear Sister

I congratulate you & Mr. Vernon on being about to receive into your family the most accomplished Coquette in England. As a very distinguished Flirt, I have always been taught to consider her; but it has lately fallen in my way to hear some particulars of her conduct at Langford, which proves that she does not confine herself to that sort of honest flirtation which satisfies most people, but aspires to the more delicious gratification of making a whole family miserable. By her behaviour to Mr. Manwaring she gave

jealousy & wretchedness to his wife, & by her attentions to a young man previously attached to Mr. Manwaring's sister deprived an amiable girl of her Lover. I learnt all this from a Mr. Smith, now in this neighbourhood (I have dined with him, at Hurst & Wilford), who is just come from Langford, where he was a fortnight in the house with her Ladyship, & who is therefore well qualified to make the communication.

What a Woman she must be! I long to see her, & shall certainly accept your kind invitation, that I may form some idea of those bewitching powers which can do so much – engaging at the same time, & in the same house, the affections of two Men, who were neither of them at liberty to bestow them – and all this without the charm of Youth! I am glad to find Miss Vernon does not accompany her Mother to Churchill, as she has not even Manners to recommend her, & according to Mr. Smith's account, is equally dull & proud. Where Pride & Stupidity unite there can be no dissimulation worthy notice, & Miss Vernon shall be consigned to unrelenting contempt; but by all that I can gather, Lady Susan possesses a degree of captivating Deceit which it must be pleasing to witness & detect. I shall be with you very soon, & am

your affec. Brother R. DE COURCY

## **LETTER FIVE**

### **LADY SUSAN VERNON TO MRS. JOHNSON**

Churchill.

I received your note, my dear Alicia, just before I left Town, & rejoice to be assured that Mr. Johnson suspected nothing of your engagement the evening before. It is

undoubtedly better to deceive him entirely; since he will be stubborn, he must be tricked. I arrived here in safety, & have no reason to complain of my reception from Mr. Vernon; but I confess myself not equally satisfied with the behaviour of his Lady. She is perfectly well-bred, indeed, & has the air of a woman of fashion, but her Manners are not such as can persuade me of her being prepossessed in my favour. I wanted her to be delighted at seeing me – I was as amiable as possible on the occasion – but all in vain. She does not like me. To be sure, when we consider that I did take some pains to prevent my Brother-in-law's marrying her, this want of cordiality is not very surprising; & yet it shews an illiberal & vindictive spirit to resent a project which influenced me six years ago, & which never succeeded at last.

I am sometimes half disposed to repent that I did not let Charles buy Vernon Castle, when we were obliged to sell it; but it was a trying circumstance, especially as the sale took place exactly at the time of his marriage; & everybody ought to respect the delicacy of those feelings which could not endure that my Husband's Dignity should be lessened by his younger brother's having possession of the Family Estate. Could Matters have been so arranged as to prevent the necessity of our leaving the Castle, could we have lived with Charles & kept him single, I should have been very far from persuading my husband to dispose of it elsewhere; but Charles was then on the point of marrying Miss De Courcy, & the event has justified me. Here are Children in abundance, & what benefit could have accrued to me from his purchasing Vernon? My having prevented it may perhaps have given his wife an unfavourable impression – but where there is a disposition to dislike, a motive will never be wanting; & as to money-matters it has not withheld him from being very useful to me. I really have a regard for him, he is so easily imposed on!

The house is a good one, the Furniture fashionable, & everything announces plenty & elegance. Charles is very rich, I am sure; when a Man has once got his name in a Banking House, he rolls in money. But they do not know what to do with it, keep very little company, & never go to Town but on business. We shall be as stupid as possible. I mean to win my Sister-in-law's heart through the children; I know all their names already, & am going to attach myself with the greatest sensibility to one in particular, a young Frederic, whom I take on my lap & sigh over for his dear Uncle's sake.

Poor Manwaring! – I need not tell you how much I miss him – how perpetually he is in my Thoughts. I found a dismal letter from him on my arrival here, full of complaints of his wife & sister, & lamentations on the cruelty of his fate. I passed off the letter as his wife's, to the Vernons, & when I write to him, it must be under cover to you.

Yours Ever, S. V.

## **LETTER SIX**

### **MRS. VERNON TO MR. DE COURCY**

Churchill

Well, my dear Reginald, I have seen this dangerous creature, & must give you some description of her, tho' I hope you will soon be able to form your own judgement. She is really excessively pretty. However you may choose to question the allurements of a Lady no longer young, I must, for my own part, declare that I have seldom seen so lovely a Woman as Lady Susan. She is delicately fair, with fine grey eyes & dark eyelashes; & from her appearance one would

not suppose her more than five & twenty, tho' she must in fact be ten years older. I was certainly not disposed to admire her, tho' always hearing she was beautiful; but I cannot help feeling that she possesses an uncommon union of Symmetry, Brilliancy, & Grace. Her address to me was so gentle, frank, & even affectionate, that, if I had not known how much she has always disliked me for marrying Mr. Vernon, & that we had never met before, I should have imagined her an attached friend. One is apt, I beleive, to connect assurance of manner with coquetry, & to expect that an impudent address will naturally attend an impudent mind; at least I was myself prepared for an improper degree of confidence in Lady Susan; but her Countenance is absolutely sweet, & her voice & manner winningly mild. I am sorry it is so, for what is this but Deceit? Unfortunately, one knows her too well. She is clever & agreeable, has all that knowledge of the world which makes conversation easy, & talks very well with a happy command of Language, which is too often used, I beleive, to make Black appear White. She has already almost persuaded me of her being warmly attached to her daughter, tho' I have been so long convinced to the contrary. She speaks of her with so much tenderness & anxiety, lamenting so bitterly the neglect of her education, which she represents however as wholly unavoidable, that I am forced to recollect how many successive Springs her Ladyship spent in Town, while her Daughter was left in Staffordshire to the care of servants, or a Governess very little better, to prevent my believing what she says.

If her manners have so great an influence on my resentful heart, you may judge how much more strongly they operate on Mr. Vernon's generous temper. I wish I could be as well satisfied as he is, that it was really her choice to leave Langford for Churchill; & if she had not stayed three months there before she discovered that her friends' manner of Living did not suit her situation or feelings, I



might have believed that concern for the loss of such a Husband as Mr. Vernon, to whom her own behaviour was far from unexceptionable, might for a time make her wish for retirement. But I cannot forget the length of her visit to the Manwarings; & when I reflect on the different mode of Life which she led with them, from that to which she must now submit, I can only suppose that the wish of establishing her reputation by following, tho' late, the path of propriety, occasioned her removal from a family where she must in reality have been particularly happy. Your friend Mr. Smith's story, however, cannot be quite correct, as she corresponds regularly with Mrs. Manwaring. At any rate it must be exaggerated; it is scarcely possible that two men should be so grossly deceived by her at once.

Yrs. &c. CATH. VERNON.

## **LETTER SEVEN**

### **LADY SUSAN VERNON TO MRS. JOHNSON**

Churchill.

My dear Alicia

You are very good in taking notice of Frederica, & I am grateful for it as a mark of your friendship; but as I cannot have any doubt of the warmth of that friendship, I am far from exacting so heavy a sacrifice. She is a stupid girl, & has nothing to recommend her. I would not, therefore, on any account have you encumber one moment of your precious time by sending for her to Edward Street, especially as every visit is so many hours deducted from the grand affair of Education, which I really wish to be attended

to while she remains with Miss Summers. I want her to play & sing with some portion of Taste & a good deal of assurance, as she has my hand & arm, & a tolerable voice. I was so much indulged in my infant years that I was never obliged to attend to anything, & consequently am without the accomplishments which are now necessary to finish a pretty Woman. Not that I am an advocate for the prevailing fashion of acquiring a perfect knowledge of all Languages, Arts, & Sciences. It is throwing time away; to be Mistress of French, Italian, & German, Music, Singing, Drawing, &c. will gain a Woman some applause, but will not add one Lover to her list. Grace & Manner, after all, are of the greatest importance. I do not mean, therefore, that Frederica's acquirements should be more than superficial, & I flatter myself that she will not remain long enough at School to understand anything thoroughly. I hope to see her the wife of Sir James within a twelvemonth. You know on what I ground my hope, & it is certainly a good foundation, for school must be very humiliating to a girl of Frederica's age. And by the by, you had better not invite her any more on that account, as I wish her to find her situation as unpleasant as possible. I am sure of Sir James at any time, & could make him renew his application by a Line. I shall trouble you meanwhile to prevent his forming any other attachment when he comes to Town. Ask him to your house occasionally, & talk to him of Frederica, that he may not forget her.

Upon the whole, I commend my own conduct in this affair extremely, & regard it as a very happy instance of circumspection & tenderness. Some Mothers would have insisted on their daughter's accepting so good an offer on the first overture, but I could not answer it to myself to force Frederica into a marriage from which her heart revolted; & instead of adopting so harsh a measure, merely propose to make it her own choice, by rendering her thoroughly

uncomfortable till she does accept him. – But enough of this tiresome girl.

You may well wonder how I contrive to pass my time here, & for the first week it was most insufferably dull. Now, however, we begin to mend; our party is enlarged by Mrs. Vernon's Brother, a handsome young Man, who promises me some amusement. There is something about him which rather interests me, a sort of sauciness & familiarity which I shall teach him to correct. He is lively & seems clever; & when I have inspired him with greater respect for me than his sister's kind offices have implanted, he may be an agreeable Flirt. There is exquisite pleasure in subduing an insolent spirit, in making a person predetermined to dislike, acknowledge one's superiority. I have disconcerted him already by my calm reserve, & it shall be my endeavour to humble the pride of these self-important De Courcys still lower, to convince Mrs. Vernon that her sisterly cautions have been bestowed in vain, & to persuade Reginald that she has scandalously belied me. This project will serve at least to amuse me, & prevent my feeling so acutely this dreadful separation from You & all whom I love. Adieu.

Yours Ever  
S. VERNON.

## **LETTER EIGHT**

### **MRS. VERNON TO LADY DE COURCY**

Churchill.

My dear Mother

You must not expect Reginald back again for some time. He desires me to tell you that the present open weather induced him to accept Mr. Vernon's invitation to prolong his stay in Sussex, that they may have some hunting together. He means to send for his Horses immediately, & it is impossible to say when you may see him in Kent. I will not disguise my sentiments on this change from you, my dear Madam, tho' I think you had better not communicate them to my father, whose excessive anxiety about Reginald would subject him to an alarm which might seriously affect his health & spirits. Lady Susan has certainly contrived, in the space of a fortnight, to make my Brother like her. In short, I am persuaded that his continuing here beyond the time originally fixed for his return is occasioned as much by a degree of fascination towards her, as by the wish of hunting with Mr. Vernon, & of course I cannot receive that pleasure from the length of his visit which my Brother's company would otherwise give me. I am, indeed, provoked at the artifice of this unprincipled Woman. What stronger proof of her dangerous abilities can be given than this perversion of Reginald's judgement, which when he entered the house was so decidedly against her? In his last letter he actually gave me some particulars of her behaviour at Langford, such as he received from a Gentleman who knew her perfectly well, which, if true, must raise abhorrence against her, & which Reginald himself was entirely disposed to credit. His opinion of her, I am sure, was as low as of any Woman in England; & when he first came it was evident that he considered her as one entitled neither to Delicacy nor respect, & that he felt she would be delighted with the attentions of any Man inclined to flirt with her.

Her behaviour, I confess, has been calculated to do away with such an idea; I have not detected the smallest impropriety in it – nothing of vanity, of pretension, of Levity; & she is altogether so attractive that I should not wonder at his being delighted with her, had he known nothing of her

previous to this personal acquaintance; but against reason, against conviction, to be so well pleased with her, as I am sure he is, does really astonish me. His admiration was at first very strong, but no more than was natural, & I did not wonder at his being much struck by the gentleness & delicacy of her Manners; but when he has mentioned her of late it has been in terms of more extraordinary praise; & yesterday he actually said that he could not be surprised at any effect produced on the heart of Man by such Loveliness & such Abilities; & when I lamented, in reply, the badness of her disposition, he observed that whatever might have been her errors, they were to be imputed to her neglected Education & early Marriage, & that she was altogether a wonderful Woman.

This tendency to excuse her conduct, or to forget it in the warmth of admiration, vexes me; & if I did not know that Reginald is too much at home at Churchill to need an invitation for lengthening his visit, I should regret Mr. Vernon's giving him any.

Lady Susan's intentions are of course those of absolute coquetry, or a desire of universal admiration. I cannot for a moment imagine that she has anything more serious in view; but it mortifies me to see a young Man of Reginald's sense duped by her at all. I am, &c.

CATH. VERNON.

## **LETTER NINE**

### **MRS. JOHNSON TO LADY S. VERNON**

Edward St.

My dearest Friend

I congratulate you on Mr. De Courcy's arrival, & I advise you by all means to marry him; his Father's Estate is, we know, considerable, & I beleive certainly entailed. Sir Reginald is very infirm, & not likely to stand in your way long. I hear the young Man well spoken of; & tho' no one can really deserve you, my dearest Susan, Mr. De Courcy may be worth having. Manwaring will storm of course, but you may easily pacify him; besides, the most scrupulous point of honour could not require you to wait for his emancipation. I have seen Sir James; he came to Town for a few days last week, & called several times in Edward Street. I talked to him about you & your Daughter, & he is so far from having forgotten you, that I am sure he would marry either of you with pleasure. I gave him hopes of Frederica's relenting, & told him a great deal of her improvements. I scolded him for making Love to Maria Manwaring; he protested that he had been only in joke, & we both laughed heartily at her disappointment; and, in short, were very agreeable. He is as silly as ever. – Yours faithfully

ALICIA.

## **LETTER TEN**

### **LADY SUSAN VERNON TO MRS. JOHNSON**

Churchill.

I am obliged to you, my dear friend, for your advice respecting Mr. De Courcy, which I know was given with the full conviction of its expediency, tho' I am not quite determined on following it. I cannot easily resolve on anything so serious as Marriage; especially as I am not at present in want of money, & might perhaps, till the old



Gentleman's death, be very little benefited by the match. It is true that I am vain enough to believe it within my reach. I have made him sensible of my power, & can now enjoy the pleasure of triumphing over a Mind prepared to dislike me, & prejudiced against all my past actions. His sister, too, is, I hope, convinced how little the ungenerous representations of any one to the disadvantage of another will avail when opposed to the immediate influence of Intellect & Manner. I see plainly that she is uneasy at my progress in the good opinion of her Brother, & conclude that nothing will be wanting on her part to counteract me; but having once made him doubt the justice of her opinion of me, I think I may defy her. It has been delightful to me to watch his advances towards intimacy, especially to observe his altered manner in consequence of my repressing by the calm dignity of my deportment his insolent approach to direct familiarity. My conduct has been equally guarded from the first, & I never behaved less like a Coquette in the whole course of my Life, tho' perhaps my desire of dominion was never more decided. I have subdued him entirely by sentiment & serious conversation, & made him, I may venture to say, at least half in Love with me, without the semblance of the most commonplace flirtation. Mrs. Vernon's consciousness of deserving every sort of revenge that it can be in my power to inflict for her ill-offices could alone enable her to perceive that I am actuated by any design in behaviour so gentle & unpretending. Let her think & act as she chuses, however. I have never yet found that the advice of a Sister could prevent a young Man's being in love if he chose it. We are advancing now towards some kind of confidence, & in short are likely to be engaged in a sort of platonic friendship. On my side you may be sure of its never being more, for if I were not already as much attached to another person as I can be to any one, I should make a point of not bestowing my affection on a Man who had dared to think so meanly of me.

Reginald has a good figure, & is not unworthy the praise you have heard given him, but is still greatly inferior to our friend at Langford. He is less polished, less insinuating than Manwaring, & is comparatively deficient in the power of saying those delightful things which put one in good humour with oneself & all the world. He is quite agreeable enough, however, to afford me amusement, & to make many of those hours pass very pleasantly which would otherwise be spent in endeavouring to overcome my sister-in-law's reserve, & listening to her Husband's insipid talk.

Your account of Sir James is most satisfactory, & I mean to give Miss Frederica a hint of my intentions very soon. -  
Yours, &c.,

S. VERNON.

## **LETTER ELEVEN**

### **MRS. VERNON TO LADY DE COURCY**

Churchill.

I really grow quite uneasy, my dearest Mother, about Reginald, from witnessing the very rapid increase of Lady Susan's influence. They are now on terms of the most particular friendship, frequently engaged in long conversations together; & she has contrived by the most artful coquetry to subdue his Judgement to her own purposes. It is impossible to see the intimacy between them so very soon established without some alarm, tho' I can hardly suppose that Lady Susan's views extend to marriage. I wish you could get Reginald home again under any plausible pretence; he is not at all disposed to leave us, & I have given him as many hints of my Father's precarious

state of health as common decency will allow me to do in my own house. Her power over him must now be boundless, as she has entirely effaced all his former ill-opinion, & persuaded him not merely to forget but to justify her conduct. Mr. Smith's account of her proceedings at Langford, where he accused her of having made Mr. Manwaring & a young Man engaged to Miss Manwaring distractedly in love with her, which Reginald firmly beleived when he came to Churchill, is now, he is persuaded, only a scandalous invention. He has told me so in a warmth of manner which spoke his regret at having ever beleived the contrary himself.

How sincerely do I grieve that she ever entered this house! I always looked forward to her coming with uneasiness; but very far was it from originating in anxiety for Reginald. I expected a most disagreeable companion for myself, but could not imagine that my Brother would be in the smallest danger of being captivated by a Woman with whose principles he was so well acquainted, & whose character he so heartily despised. If you can get him away, it will be a good thing.

Yrs. affec:ly,  
CATH. VERNON.

## **LETTER TWELVE**

### **SIR REGINALD DE COURCY TO HIS SON**

Parklands.

I know that young Men in general do not admit of any inquiry even from their nearest relations into affairs of the heart, but I hope, my dear Reginald, that you will be superior to such as allow nothing for a Father's anxiety, &

think themselves privileged to refuse him their confidence & slight his advice. You must be sensible that as an only son, & the representative of an ancient Family, your conduct in Life is most interesting to your connections. In the very important concern of Marriage especially, there is everything at stake – your own happiness, that of your Parents, & the credit of your name. I do not suppose that you would deliberately form an absolute engagement of that nature without acquainting your Mother & myself, or at least without being convinced that we should approve of your choice; but I cannot help fearing that you may be drawn in, by the Lady who has lately attached you, to a Marriage which the whole of your Family, far & near, must highly reprobate.

Lady Susan's age is itself a material objection, but her want of character is one so much more serious that the difference of even twelve years becomes in comparison of small amount. Were you not blinded by a sort of fascination, it would be ridiculous in me to repeat the instances of great misconduct on her side, so very generally known. Her neglect of her husband, her encouragement of other Men, her extravagance & dissipation, were so gross & notorious that no one could be ignorant of them at the time, nor can now have forgotten them. To our Family she has always been represented in softened colours by the benevolence of Mr. Charles Vernon; & yet, in spite of his generous endeavours to excuse her, we know that she did, from the most selfish motives, take all possible pains to prevent his marrying Catherine.

My Years & increasing Infirmities make me very desirous, my dear Reginald, of seeing you settled in the world. To the Fortune of your wife, the goodness of my own will make me indifferent; but her family & character must be equally unexceptionable. When your choice is so fixed as that no objection can be made to either, I can promise you a ready & chearful consent; but it is my Duty to oppose a Match

which deep Art only could render probable, & must in the end make wretched.

It is possible her behaviour may arise only from Vanity, or the wish of gaining the admiration of a Man whom she must imagine to be particularly prejudiced against her; but it is more likely that she should aim at something farther. She is poor, & may naturally seek an alliance which may be advantageous to herself. You know your own rights, & that it is out of my power to prevent your inheriting the family Estate. My Ability of distressing you during my Life would be a species of revenge to which I should hardly stoop under any circumstances. I honestly tell you my Sentiments & Intentions: I do not wish to work on your Fears, but on your Sense & Affection. It would destroy every comfort of my Life to know that you were married to Lady Susan Vernon: it would be the death of that honest Pride with which I have hitherto considered my son; I should blush to see him, to hear of him, to think of him.

I may perhaps do no good but that of relieving my own mind by this Letter, but I felt it my Duty to tell you that your partiality for Lady Susan is no secret to your friends, & to warn you against her. I should be glad to hear your reasons for disbelieving Mr. Smith's intelligence; you had no doubt of its authenticity a month ago.

If you can give me your assurance of having no design beyond enjoying the conversation of a clever woman for a short period, & of yielding admiration only to her Beauty & Abilities, without being blinded by them to her faults, you will restore me to happiness; but if you cannot do this, explain to me, at least, what has occasioned so great an alteration in your opinion of her.

I am, &c.  
REGD. DE COURCY.

## **LETTER THIRTEEN**

## **LADY DE COURCY TO MRS. VERNON**

Parklands.

My dear Catherine

Unluckily I was confined to my room when your last letter came, by a cold which affected my eyes so much as to prevent my reading it myself; so I could not refuse your Father when he offered to read it to me, by which means he became acquainted, to my great vexation, with all your fears about your Brother. I had intended to write to Reginald myself as soon as my eyes would let me, to point out as well as I could the danger of an intimate acquaintance with so artful a woman as Lady Susan, to a young Man of his age & high expectations. I meant, moreover, to have reminded him of our being quite alone now, & very much in need of him to keep up our spirits these long winter evenings. Whether it would have done any good can never be settled now, but I am excessively vexed that Sir Reginald should know anything of a matter which we foresaw would make him so uneasy. He caught all your fears the moment he had read your Letter, and I am sure has not had the business out of his head since. He wrote by the same post to Reginald a long letter full of it all, & particularly asking an explanation of what he may have heard from Lady Susan to contradict the late shocking reports. His answer came this morning, which I shall enclose to you, as I think you will like to see it. I wish it was more satisfactory; but it seems written with such a determination to think well of Lady Susan, that his assurances as to Marriage, &c., do not set my heart at ease. I say all I can, however, to satisfy your Father, & he is certainly less uneasy since Reginald's letter. How provoking it is, my dear Catherine, that this unwelcome Guest of yours should not only prevent our meeting this Christmas, but be



the occasion of so much vexation & trouble! Kiss the dear Children for me. Your affec: Mother,

C. DE COURCY.

## **LETTER FOURTEEN**

### **MR. DE COURCY TO SIR REGINALD**

Churchill.

My dear Sir

I have this moment received your Letter, which has given me more astonishment than I ever felt before. I am to thank my Sister, I suppose, for having represented me in such a light as to injure me in your opinion, & give you all this alarm. I know not why she should chuse to make herself & her family uneasy by apprehending an Event which no one but herself, I can affirm, would ever have thought possible. To impute such a design to Lady Susan would be taking from her every claim to that excellent understanding which her bitterest Enemies have never denied her; & equally low must sink my pretensions to common sense if I am suspected of matrimonial views in my behaviour to her. Our difference of age must be an insuperable objection, & I entreat you, my dear Sir, to quiet your mind, & no longer harbour a suspicion which cannot be more injurious to your own peace than to our Understandings.

I can have no other view in remaining with Lady Susan, than to enjoy for a short time (as you have yourself expressed it) the conversation of a Woman of high mental powers. If Mrs. Vernon would allow something to my affection for herself & her husband in the length of my visit,

she would do more justice to us all; but my Sister is unhappily prejudiced beyond the hope of conviction against Lady Susan. From an attachment to her husband, which in itself does honour to both, she cannot forgive the endeavours at preventing their union which have been attributed to selfishness in Lady Susan; but in this case, as well as in many others, the World has most grossly injured that Lady, by supposing the worst where the motives of her conduct have been doubtful.

Lady Susan had heard something so materially to the disadvantage of my Sister, as to persuade her that the happiness of Mr. Vernon, to whom she was always much attached, would be absolutely destroyed by the Marriage. And this circumstance, while it explains the true motive of Lady Susan's conduct, & removes all the blame which has been so lavished on her, may also convince us how little the general report of any one ought to be credited; since no character, however upright, can escape the malevolence of slander. If my Sister, in the security of retirement, with as little opportunity as inclination to do Evil, could not avoid Censure, we must not rashly condemn those who, living in the World & surrounded with temptation, should be accused of Errors which they are known to have the power of committing.

I blame myself severely for having so easily beleived the slanderous tales invented by Charles Smith to the prejudice of Lady Susan, as I am now convinced how greatly they have traduced her. As to Mrs. Manwaring's jealousy, it was totally his own invention, & his account of her attaching Miss Manwaring's Lover was scarcely better founded. Sir James Martin had been drawn in by that young Lady to pay her some attention; & as he is a Man of fortune, it was easy to see that her views extended to Marriage. It is well known that Miss Manwaring is absolutely on the catch for a husband, & no one therefore can pity her for losing, by the superior attractions of another woman, the chance of being

able to make a worthy Man completely miserable. Lady Susan was far from intending such a conquest, & on finding how warmly Miss Manwaring resented her Lover's defection, determined, in spite of Mr. & Mrs. Manwaring's most earnest entreaties, to leave the family. I have reason to imagine that she did receive serious Proposals from Sir James, but her removing to Langford immediately on the discovery of his attachment, must acquit her on that article with any Mind of common candour. You will, I am sure, my dear Sir, feel the truth of this, & will hereby learn to do justice to the character of a very injured Woman.

I know that Lady Susan in coming to Churchill was governed only by the most honourable & amiable intentions; her prudence & economy are exemplary, her regard for Mr. Vernon equal even to his deserts; & her wish of obtaining my sister's good opinion merits a better return than it has received. As a Mother she is unexceptionable; her solid affection for her Child is shewn by placing her in hands where her Education will be properly attended to; but because she has not the blind & weak partiality of most Mothers, she is accused of wanting Maternal Tenderness. Every person of Sense, however, will know how to value & commend her well-directed affection, & will join me in wishing that Frederica Vernon may prove more worthy than she has yet done of her Mother's tender care.

I have now, my dear Sir, written my real sentiments of Lady Susan; you will know from this Letter how highly I admire her Abilities, & esteem her Character; but if you are not equally convinced by my full & solemn assurance that your fears have been most idly created, you will deeply mortify & distress me. – I am, &c.

R. DE COURCY.

## **LETTER FIFTEEN**

## **MRS. VERNON TO LADY DE COURCY**

Churchill.

My dear Mother

I return you Reginald's letter, and rejoice with all my heart that my father is made easy by it: tell him so, with my congratulations; but, between ourselves, I must own it has only convinced ME of my brother's having no PRESENT intention of marrying Lady Susan, not that he is in no danger of doing so three months hence. He gives a very plausible account of her behaviour at Langford; I wish it may be true, but his intelligence must come from herself, and I am less disposed to believe it than to lament the degree of intimacy subsisting, between them implied by the discussion of such a subject.

I am sorry to have incurred his displeasure, but can expect nothing better while he is so very eager in Lady Susan's justification. He is very severe against me indeed, and yet I hope I have not been hasty in my judgment of her. Poor woman! though I have reasons enough for my dislike, I cannot help pitying her at present, as she is in real distress, and with too much cause. She had this morning a letter from the lady with whom she has placed her daughter, to request that Miss Vernon might be immediately removed, as she had been detected in an attempt to run away. Why, or whither she intended to go, does not appear; but, as her situation seems to have been unexceptionable, it is a sad thing, and of course highly distressing to Lady Susan.

Frederica must be as much as sixteen, and ought to know better; but from what her mother insinuates, I am afraid she is a perverse girl. She has been sadly neglected, however, and her mother ought to remember it.