

Ashton. March 22nd 1813.

I have just written a long letter to Cornelia & will now do the same to you my dear Cousin, if my patience & the few topics I have for letter writing will permit - of the first you know I can have not the least doubt, but I confess I have some for the latter, as I see, & hear & know nothing, & therefore can have nothing to relate, except indeed my thoughts & dreams, which I expect would be equally tiresome, tho I never could decide certainly which was the worst of the two - you concluded your last letter if I remember right with these words "I am sick & stupid, write soon & give me some spice of comfort". now although I am extremely diffident of my abilities, in the consolatory way, especially, I really had determined, good girl as I was, to write you immediately a long & "most kind affectionate letter" (Miss Edgeworths Belinda) but just as I had come to this resolution, news was brought us, of your little strangers arrival, which effectually prevented it, & determined me to wait until you had resumed your lessons, & all around you was quiet & settled again - supposing that to be the case now, I have taken advantage of this cloudy Sunday (tho if it was ever so fair I could not go out) to answer your letter & postscript, & write a ~~sketch~~ at once to suffice until I go to Richmond, & have something worth writing about. Tell Mary that as long as I possibly could, I found excuses for her not writing, but that I am now convinced she thinks the correspondence, trifling, childish, & utterly beneath her, & has determined to drop it entirely - I wrote to her repeatedly the early part of the winter, & received but one letter from her in answer to all mine - I certainly shall not trouble her with any more of my tiresome scratches, but I am sorry, extremely sorry that she should have given up a correspondence which afforded me, & I believe did, her once, such real pleasure. I am not in the habit of complaining & will therefore drop this subject ~~now~~ ^{forever}.

Harriet wrote to me by the post, & to Mama by the last mail - she actually seems to be well with spirits & writes more extravagantly than ever - she is delighted with all her schoolmates, but has chosen Virginia Flett, for her intimate, confidential friend. she gives a curious account of the commencement of their intimacy - they were not at all acquainted for some time, but at last one evening Miss Flett began to talk of her dear brother the sailor - Harriet says she "followed suite" - & she asked her, to make her a compliment of brother Mann for a husband, & in return offered her brother Jack - this was agreed upon & they have ever since been sworn friends & call each other constantly sister Randolph, & sister Flett - all this Harriet acknowledges to be a little ridiculous, but she says she is really a charming girl, & "it is so delightful to have some one to talk to about sailors in general & brother Mann in particular" - have you written to her, or has she, written to any of you lately? -

I have never had the least idea of accompanying Aunt Randolph to Georgetown, tho' I confess I should like it above all things - my trip to Richmond even, is not quite certain, at least in my mind, but I shall be extremely sorry & disappointed if it is out of my power to go. there is a new difficulty just started, which tho' it is very foolish gives me a great deal of trouble - I put on last week 2 days following, 2 large mustard plaisters on the back of neck which has made a dreadful sore, full in view (that is to a person behind me) & will leave a red or yellow scar for many weeks - now went that be quite shocking for a young lady who is just going to town, to turn out?

My dear Virginia how different our letters are now, from what they were 2 or 3 years ago - do you remember what at this season used to be the burden of them all? our gardens - every little green shoot that made its appearance above ground, every hyacinth that budded, every crocus & violet that bloomed, was hailed with the liveliest pleasure, & noted down in our letters to each other with as much exactness & as much delight as we now take in mentioning an expected or promised visit to Richmond.

happy thoughtless beings "unsophisticated little country angels" we
 were then, & for what have we exchanged all these innocent child-
 -ish pleasures? - can you tell me? for it is really a question I can
 -not answer satisfactorily myself. - I will not pursue this subject
 for it is one calculated to inspire me with melancholy & you -
 with what? variation at my tiresomeness perhaps -

The 1st volume of the *Eniæid* I have been done with a long while
 & the 2nd I finished more than a week ago. it shall be sent by
 the first opportunity, & I am sorry it was forgotten before as it has
 kept you waiting. you read it next to the *Iliad* do not you? or
 have you read the *Odyssey*? - I have just been reading *Belinda*
Dutton again, & like it almost as much as I did the first time.
 I mean I was almost as much interested in it, for I like it if
 possible even better than I did before. The character of the he-
 -roine, is admirable I think, & pleases me more than any thing
Edgeworth has ever drawn. She has Rosamonds gaiety tempered
 refinement & Caroline Percy's high-mindedness, & nobleness, & all
 great & good qualities, without her still-dignity & insipidity.
 I have also been reading, or rather looking over the *Antiquary*
 again - it was borrowed for Mama who did not read it last
 summer, but I could not see it lying about without dipping
 into it occasionally - do you like the character of the heroine
 of that? *Isabella Wardour* - I confess I do not - she is too cold,
 & calculating, & above all things, too prudent for me. prudence
 is certainly a virtue to a certain degree, but when it is carried
 too far it renders a person, if not selfish, at least, unin-
 -teresting. - Now my dear Virginia I have a thousand excuses
 to make for this letter but I shall content myself with two - first
 the attribution the bad writing to my miserable pen, & 2^{ndly}
 the nonsense to a dreadful cold in the head which certainly
 so far from clearing my ideas, as I have heard of a lady's
 saying once, makes me so stupid, & sometimes so cross that I
 scarcely know what to do myself - adieu - I am your faithful
 - your son I like the name so well, that I mean to
 adopt it - at least whenever it suits my convenience or whim.

Love to my dear Aunt & Cousin Ellen - Mama also desires to be
remembered to you all - kiss the children for me, & tell me, for I
am dying to know, what name you have fixed upon for the little
boy - not Joseph Casa de terra I hope -
Tell Cornelia I forgot the Tickner affair when I wrote to her, but
I shall reserve it now for another letter, or till I see her again -
I will only say that I cannot, I will not get knowledge that "it is but
a romance after all" - adieu once more -

Miss Virginia Randolph
Monticello.