Love and Madness 1786

Letter LI: Pages 140-154

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The fictional part consists of a sequence of imaginary chatty, romantic letters between James

Love and Madness, by Herbert Croft, is a fictional story based on a true event.

Hackman, a soldier who became a clergyman, & Martha Ray, who was the mistress of the earl of Sandwich. The real event culminates with the death of Martha, who was shot by Hackman (her lover) as

she was leaving Covent Garden in 1779, and Hackman was executed for the murder. Herbert Croft, the author of Love and Madness, owned the house in Shoreditch that Chatterton lodged in. This connection seems to have heightened his interest in the Chatterton

story, which he must have seen as a surefire way of increasing interest in his book. All he

needed to do was find some way of integrating the two stories. So, off to Bristol he went and he met with Catcott (the first port of call for anyone interested in Chatterton). Catcott introduced him to Chatterton's mother, Sarah, and his sister, Mary, who showed him Chatterton's correspondence. Croft asked if he could take the letters for a few hours and then promptly left town taking the letters with him. The next Sarah and Mary heard about the letters was when they discovered they had been woven into and published for all to read in Croft's sensational book, which went into a number of editions, seven at the last time of counting. Note: Croft identifies each of the letters between Hackman and Martha with Roman numerals. He also uses Roman numerals to identify the genuine Chatterton letters, which does add a little confusion. However, it is easy enough to resolve as follows:

The Chatterton letters run from page I to page VIII. The letters between Martha and Hackman run from letter I to LIV

Letter LI is a very long letter, which stretches from p.140 to p.272. I have divided the Letter into sets of pages containing key Chatterton items. At the bottom of each set of pages is a link to take you to the next set of pages in sequence, or you can click the following link to go Back to Herbert Croft Contents Page

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page 144: Croft states that Chatterton's father was a schoolmaster and Sexton & that he died 'very soon after, if not before, the birth of his son.' Chatterton 'who

indisputably received no other education than what he picked up at a charity-school at a place called St Augustine's Back in Bristol. [Croft is wrong on a few points, which you will know having read the other biographies, for example, Chatterton's

father was not a Sexton]. : View

(144/145) **Chatterton's letter** to the newspaper re the 'Bridge Narrative': <u>View</u> (146) Croft is sure Chatterton knew Latin: <u>View</u>

received £5, Mary had her whitlowed finger cured by Barrett. : View

- Dunhelmus Bristoliensis. Barrett and Catcott. 'Ballad of Charitie.' Chatterton only produced two 'originals'; the rest were all 'transcripts.'
- (148) Antiquarian at Cambridge states Chatterton, had he lived, could not have escaped hanging. : <u>View</u> (149/150) Chatterton was 'addicted to women, like all youths of strong imaginations': View

(147) Barrett and Catcott were not generous to Chatterton or his family. Mrs Chatterton

(150/1) Chatterton wrote on both sides of the question. Memoirs of a Sad Dog, signed Harry Wildfire. Five lines of it in T&CM. : View

(152/3) Walpole is not blameable for the life or death of Chatterton. : View

Thomas Warton. Joseph Warton

- (154) A few lines from The Story of Wylliam Canynge (verse 17 only): View Note: the earliest printing is in the 1777 edition: View
- LETTER LI. The Same to the Same.

WHILE I live I will never forget your

- street,

behaviour yesterday. Were I to live an hundred years, I could never thank you enough. But, you shall govern. The

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Panel 1: Page 140: Letter LI

LETTER LI. 141 The talk which you have fet me about Charterton, is only a further proof of your regard for me. You know the warmth of my passions; and you think that if I do not employ myself, they may flame out, and confume me. Well, then, I will spend a morning or two in arranging what I have collected respecting the Author of Rowley's poems. Every syllable which you will read, I affure you, shall be authentic. Did you start at "The author of Rowley's Poems?" My mind does not now harbour a doubt that Chatterton wrote the whole, whatever I thought when we read

them together at Hinchinbrook. The internal evidence of the matter shall not puzzle

you: but you shall tell me whether you don't think it easier for Chatterton to have imitated the style of Rowley's age (which he

has not done exactly, if you believe those

who think as I think), than for Rowley to

write in a style which did not exist till so

many ages after his time. To suppose him to

have found half, and to have added to them;

or to consider him as a cat's paw in the bu-

finess to some contemporary Rowley, in order to extricate a fictitious Rowley from

oblivion,

LETTER 142 oblivion, would in my humble opinion be nonsense. For my own part, though he might find some old manuscripts, I cannot believe that he found a fyllable which he has attributed to Rowley. Who will engage to prove; from internal evidence, the antiquity of any one of Rowley's compositions? What he did find, certainly suggested to him the idea of pretending to have found more; but how shall we persuade Credulity to believe, that all Rowley's poems were copied from old manuscripts, when the only manuscripts produced in confirmation of the story are indisputably proved to be modern? Is any one fool enough to believe, that Chatterton was only the blind subterraneous channel, through which these things were to emerge to day, and float for ever down the stream of fame? This (without mentioning other objections to such a ridiculous belief) were to suppose two people to determine on the same strange conduct, and two people (the real and the

foster father) to keep with equal fidelity the fame fecret: and would the foster-father have been as fond and careful of another's

secret, as of the offspring of his own inven-

It

tion?

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It is not clear to me that Chatterton's life (af fuch a scrap of existence can be called a life) does not exhibit circumstances still more extraordinary, if possible, than his being the author of Rowley's poems. But I possess not the abilities which Johnson displayed in his famous Life of Savage: nor is this a formal life of Chatterton; though fuch a thing might well employ even the pen of Johnson. This is only an idle letter to my dear Martha. -Oh, my Martha, you, who contributed fo liberally, last year, to extricate from distress the abilities of a ---; what would you not have done for a Chatterton! Thomas Chatterton, destined to puzzle at least, if not to impose upon, some of the ablest critics and antiquarians which the most polished age of England has produced, was born at Bristol, Nov. 20, 1752. His father had been master of the free-school in Pile-street in that city, and was sexton of St. Mary Redcliffe church. History condescends not to relate any thing more of fuch an ignoble family, than that they had been fextons of the same church for near a century and a half. It feems to have been determined by Fortune,

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tune, that this poor lad, I ought rather to

fay, this extraordinary human being, should

have no obligation but to genius and to him-

felf. His father, as he was a schoolmaster,

and is reported to have been a tolerable poet

for a sexton, might perhaps have given h s fon a free school education, had he lived to

fee him old enough for instruction. But the

fexton died very foon after, if not before, the

birth of his fon; who indisputably received

no other education than what he picked up

at a charity-school at a place called St. Augustine's Back in Bristol. Reading, writing, and accounts, composed the whole circle of sciences which were taught at this university

On the 1st of July, 1767, he was articled

clerk to an attorney of Bristol, whom I have

not been able to find out. From him, I un-

derstand, has been procured a strange, mad

manuscript of Chatterton, which he called

When the new bridge at Bristol was

finished, there appeared, in Farly's Bristol

Journal, an account of the ceremonies on opening the old bridge (the piece is prefixed to the volume of Chatterton's Miscellanies),

preceded

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of our Bristol Shakespear.

his will.

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LI.

Page 145: Chatterton's letter to Felix Farley's Bristol Journal: "To the Printer. Oct. 1, 1768. The following description of the fryar's passing over the old bridge..."

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preceded by these words:--"To the 6 Printer. Oct. 1, 1768. The following 66 description of the fryars' first passing over 44 the old bridge, taken from an old MS. " may not at this time be unacceptable to

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iron chest placed by William Cannynge (the founder of the church of which C's family had so long been sextons) in a muniment room over the northern portico of St. Mary Redcliffe. Warton (in his History of English Poetry) says, that when this appeared, he was about seventeen. Days are more material in C's life than years in the lives of others. He wanted, you see, something of Exteen. One fact is curious, that, though it was not possible for him to have picked H up Page 146 LETTER LI. 146 up Latin at a charity-school where Latin was not taught, his note to the printer has, for no apparent reason, a Latin signature, Dunhelmus Bristoliensis. This Latin certainly was not Rowley's. It must have been C's. The memoir procured C. the acquaintance of some gentlemen of Bristol, who, because they condescended to receive from him the compositions which he brought them, without giving him much, if any thing, in return, fondly imagined themselves the patrons of genius. Mr. Catcott and Mr. Barrett, a pewterer and a furgeon, of his obligations to whom you will fee him fpeak in his letters, were his principal, if not his only patrons. To these gentlemen

" the generality of your readers. Your's, " Dunhelmus Bristoliensis." Curiosity at last traced the insertion of this curious memoir to Chatterton. To the threats of those who treated him (agreeably to his age and appearance) as a child, he returned nothing but haughtiness, and a refusal to give any account. To milder usage and many promises the boy, after some time, confessed that he had received that and other MSS. from his father, which he had found in an

> poems; nor has the sale of them turned out badly. In consequence of the money got by poems which Chatterton certainly brought to light, which I firmly believe C. to have written, his mother acknowledges to have received the immense sum of five guineas, by the hands of Mr. Catcott; and Mr. Barrett, without fee or reward, cured the whitlowed finger of the fifter. Talk no more of the neglect of genius in any age or country, when, in this age and country, Rowley's poems have produced fuch fortunes to the

transaction, to state their accounts.

author and his family. Should I ever appear in print on this subject, I would publickly call upon the gentlemen concerned in this Has not the world a right to know what H 2

he produced, between Oct. 1768, and April 1770 (befides many things which he confessed to be his own, and many which, in the interval, appeared in the Town and Country Magazine), all Rowley's poems, except the " ballad of Charitie." Of these only two, I think, and those the shortest, he pretended to be the original MSS. The rest were transcripts, in his own hand; of some of which he acknowledged himself the author. Concerning these curiosities no distinct or satisfactory Page 147 factory account, by friend or enemy, by threat or promise, could ever be drawn from For these curiofities how much he received from his Bristol patrons does not appear. His patrons do not boast of their generofity to him. They (Catcott at least) received no inconsiderable sum for Rowley's

inekimable

Catcott fairly bought of Chatterton (he does not pretend to have bought all), and what was the fair purchase-money of these Page 148

LETTER LI. 148 inestimable treasures? Let us know what the editors of Rowley's poems gave and received for them, and what the fale of them has produced. Is the fon to be declared guilty of forgery? Are his forgeries to be converted into (I believe, no inconsiderable fums of) money? And is the mother and fifter's share to be five guineas? Either mean envy of C's extraordinary genius, or manly abhorrence of his detestable death, leads almost every person, who talks

or writes about this boy, to tell you of his shocking profligacy and his total want of principle. One antiquarian of Cambridge has gone fo far as to tell those of whom he has made inquiries concerning him, that his death was of little consequence, fince he could not long have escaped hanging. C. never did any thing which merited hanging, fo much as it is merited by him who can dare to advance such an uncharitable affertion without a shadow of probability. Who knows but this venerable feer, in his next vision, may choose to discover that I shall live to be hanged; may fee your H. gibbeted in perspective; because my indignation res-

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had contrived to crowd much profligacy and much want of principle, some perhaps may be ascribed to his youth, and some to want of friends. Johnson, I remember, defends even the life of Savage, which differed from Chatterton's in more circumstances than its length, by some such observation as this; that the sons of Affluence are improper judges of his conduct, and that few wife men will venture to affirm they should have lived

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his monkish bigotry?

eues fuch a villain as poor Chatterton from

When C. left this world, in August 1770,

he wanted as many months as intervene between August and November to complete his 18th year. If into so small a space he

better than Savage in Savage's situation. Do profligate and unprincipled, some of the tenderest epithets vouchsafed poor Chatterton, mean dishonest or undutiful, an unkind brother or an unfeeling child? The dullest enemies of his genius can produce no proofs of any fuch crime. Some papers, which I shall fend you, will contain the fullest proof of the contrary. Do they mean that, being a young man, he was addicted to women; that, being a youth of fuch an imagination, he

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he was addicted to women, like all youths of

strong imaginations? Do the epithets mean

that he exhibited those damnable proofs of

his crimes which the civilifing Bougain-

ville exported into the country of Omiah?

The proofs (if there were any, which his

bedfellow at his first lodging in town denies)

only show that he was unlucky. The crimes

let not older men, who may possibly them-

must be admitted. Do they mean that, writing to procure bread for himself, his mother and his fifter, he wrote on any fide, and on any subject, which would afford bread? The crime must perhaps be admitted. Yet,

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selves, in this sense of the words, be a little unprincipled, a little profligate, head the advanced guard of veterans who are to attack this infant Hercules in his cradle. And let it be remembered, that, in the " Memoirs of a Sad Dog," figned Harry Wildfire, inferted in the Town and Country Magazine, where Chatterton evidently fat to his own pencil for two or three features, there is this passage: " As I know the art of Curlism pretty well, I make a tolerable hand of it. But, Mr. Printer, he late prosecution against the booksellers having frightened them all out LETTER LI. 151 of their patriotism, I am necessitated either to write for the entertainment of the public, or in defence of the

In the preface to Chatterton's Miscellanies, we are even affured that "his profligacy was at least as conspicuous as his abilities," p. 18. Indeed! Then do I believe he was the most profligate mortal of his age (I

man out of place a patriot."

his death.

ministry. As I have some little remains of conscience, the latter is not very agreeable. Political writing of either fide is of little fervice to the entertainment or instruction of the reader. Abuse and scurrility are generally the chief figures in the language of party. I am not of the opinion of those authors, who deem every man in place a rascal, and every

had almost faid, of any age) that ever existed. The Admirable Crichton (Adventurer, No. 81) bears no comparison with C. either as to the

forwardness or the greatness of his abilities; still less in point of education, for he studied at St. Andrew's in Scotland till he was above

three years older than C. was at the time of

The infinuations thrown out by the editor

of Chatterton's Miscellanies, and even by

Mr. Warton perhaps against the elegant writer at Strawberry-hill, are certainly not founded. To impute Chatterton's death, in 1770, to the person, who, in 1768, refused H4

Let me now make you acquainted with the indisputable history of this boy till he left Bristol. As he says, in his "ftory of " Canynge," "In all his sheepen gambols, and child's play, 66 At every merry-making, fair, or wake, " I kenn a purpled light of wisdom's ray. "He ate down learning with the wastle cake. " As wife as any of the aldermen, " He'd wit enough to make a mayor at ten." than the creation of Rowley. " Pope." Cooper. 1756. P. 33, 243, &c.

Beattie has hardly been able to invent a more strikingpicture of his minstrel, than is exhibited of Chatterton in a letter written by his fifter, last year, to a gentleman who desired her to recollect every circumstance con-"Wildfire," he calls him Baron Otranto: and, in the February before Chatterton's deceit began, Mr. W. published "Historic doubts on the life and reign of Richard III." which Chatterton perhaps confidered as a bolder attempt The Editor. Warton's "Effay on the Writings and Genius of Location of Book: The library of **QE!** Go to the next set of pages pp.155-161: View Go Back to Herbert Croft Contents Page

Page 152 LETTER 152 to believe that some of his compositions had been written 300 years before, were to treat others still more uncharitably, if it be possible, than Chatterton has been treated. Mr. Walpole is by no means blameable for the life or the death of Chatterton*. * Yet even Mr. Walpole cannot help regretting that he was not better acquainted with Chatterton's "fierce and " untameable spirit, his consciousness of superior abilities, 66 his inattention to wordly discretion, his scorn of owing 66 subfishence or reputation to any thing but the ebullitions " of his own genius." (" A letter to the editor of Chatter-6 ton's Miscellanies," printed at Strawberry-hill, 1779) Even he cannot help lamenting that he did not "contri-66 bute to rescue such a spirit from itself, its worst enemy." How happens it that, after this, such a writer, no less humane than elegant, joins the general cry against the morals of Chatterton? But were, or were not, all the crimes which can be proved against this poor boy, any thing more than the universal foibles of youth? To perfift therefore to charge him with those crimes, is it any thing more than to accuse him of his youth? And pure should be that mouth of age which ventures such an accusation; for it may be remembered (the editor protests he means not the most distant application in the present day) that when, in the year 1740, on the feamen's bill, Mr. Horace Walpole reflected upon the youth of Pitt, that great man replied, he would not undertake to determine whether youth might justly be imputed as a reproach; but this he would affirm, that the wretch, whose age has only added obstinacy to Aupidity, Page 153 LLTTER LI. 153 Has the reverend Mr. Thomas Warton any thing to urge against the vanity or the presumption of this poor boy? He should furely stupidity, is surely the object of either abhorrence or contempt, and deferves not that his grey hairs should protect him from infults: that, much more is he to be abhorred, who, as he has advanced in age, has receded from virtue, and becomes more wicked with less temptation.-Still, this patron of Ossian, and rejector of Chatterton, does not hefitate to affirm, rather barfbly, that "all of the house of forgery are relations; and that, though it be just to Chatterton's memory to fay his poverty never made him claim kindred with the richest or the most enriching branches, yet, that his ingenuity in counterfeiting styles, of and, he (W.) believes, hands, might eafily have led him to those more facile imitations of prose, promissory " notes." But furely it should have heen remembered, that, in the preface to the first edition of the Castle of Otranto, not a bcy's production, we are folemnly told it was found in the "library of an ancient catholic family in the

of north of England, and was printed at Naples, in the 66 black letter, in the year 1529;" that we are told, in the preface to the fecond edition, " the honourable author " flatters himfelf he shall appear excusable for having offered. 66 his work to the world under the borrowed personage of a translator." He should not so very uncharitably condemn the forgery, whose respectable example gave a sanction. to it, and might possibly suggest the original idea of it; for, when Chatterton ridicules Mr. W. in the story of "Harry

H 5

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furely have remembered what the Reverend

Dr. Joseph Warton thought proper to tell

the world of almost all his brother's writings,

and even of his own "Ode to Fancy."*

66 Wildfire, 20

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Page 154: 'Story of Canynge'

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