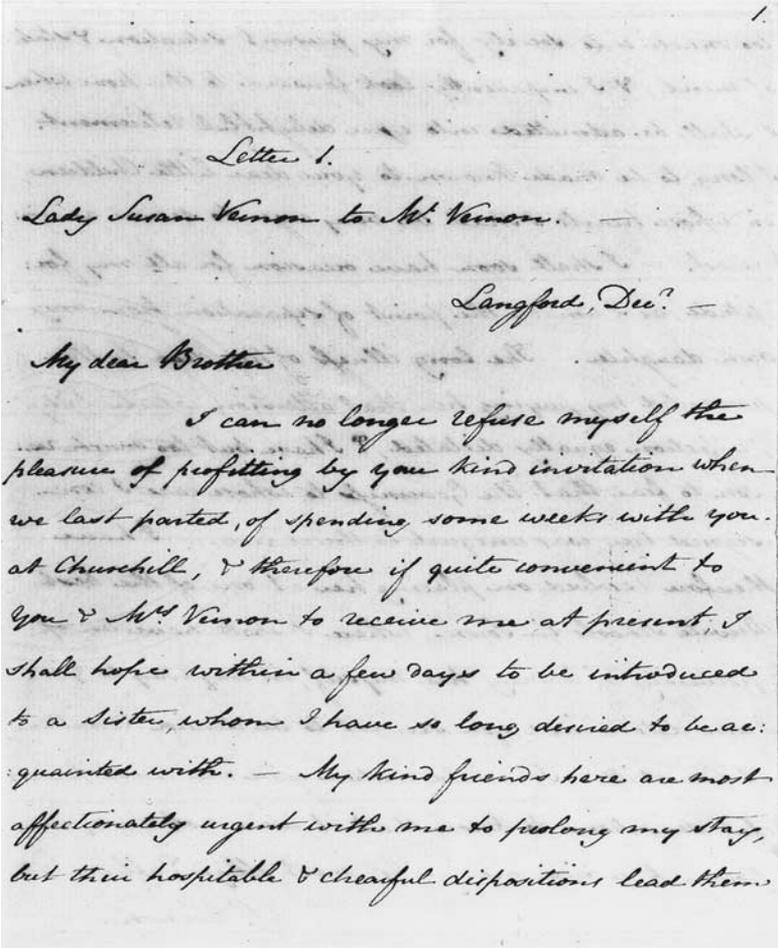


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The Fiction

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A photograph of a handwritten manuscript page, likely a letter. The paper is aged and shows some staining. The handwriting is in cursive. At the top right, there is a small number '1'. The text is as follows:

Letter 1.
Lady Susan Vernon to Mr. Vernon. —
Langford, Dec. 7 —
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 & Mr. 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 ac-
quainted with. — My kind friends here are most
affectionately urgent with me to prolong my stay,
but their hospitable & cheerful dispositions lead them

1 The first page of 'Lady Susan'.

Lady Susan¹

LETTER I.

Lady Susan Vernon² to M^r: Vernon.—

Langford, Dec^r:—

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,³ & therefore if quite convenient to you and M^{rs}: Vernon to receive me at present, I shall hope within a few days to be introduced to a sister,⁴ 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;⁵ & I impatiently look forward to the hour when I shall be admitted into your delightful retirement.⁶ 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 occasion 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 but 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,⁷ where I shall have an

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LADY SUSAN *Letter 2.*

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.—Y^r most obliged & affec: Sister

S. Vernon.⁸—

LETTER 2^d

Lady Susan to M^{rs}. 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 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,—and 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,

line 10: ‘Alicia’ written over something else, now illegible.

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 Frederica¹—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 romantic² 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, and M^{rs}. 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 off³ 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, and shall spend I hope a comfortable day with you in Town within this week.—If I am as little in favour with M^r. Johnson as ever, you must come to me at N^o. 10 Wigmore S^t.⁴—but I hope this may not be the case, for as M^r. 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,⁵ for I am really going to Churchill.—Forgive me my dear friend, it is my last resource. Were

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LADY SUSAN *Letter 3.*

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.⁶—Adeiu. I will send you a line, as soon as I arrive in Town.—Yours Ever,
 S. Vernon.

LETTER 3.

M^{rs} 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 the Christmas with you;¹ & 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 it's 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 M^{rs} 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.—M^r Vernon I think was a great deal too kind to her, when he was in Staffordshire.² Her behaviour to him,

independant of her general Character, has been so inexcusably artful & ungenerous since our marriage was first in agitation, that no one less amiable & mild than himself could have overlooked it at 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 would not be a very desirable companion here.—Reginald has long wished I know to see this 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.—

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LADY SUSAN *Letter 4.*

LETTER 4.

M^r: De Courcy to M^{rs}: Vernon.

Parklands

My dear Sister

I congratulate you & M^r: Vernon on being about to receive into your family, the most accomplished coquette¹ in England.—As a very distinguished Flirt, I have been always taught to consider her; but it has lately fallen in my way to hear some particulars of her conduct at Langford, which prove 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 M^r: Manwaring, she gave jealousy & wretchedness to his wife, & by her attentions to a young Man previously attached to M^r: Manwaring's sister, deprived an amiable girl of her Lover.—I learnt all this from a M^r: Smith now in this neighbourhood—(I have dined with him at Hurst and 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—& all this, without the charm of youth.—I am glad to find that Miss Vernon does not come with her Mother to Churchill, as she has not even manners to recommend her, & according to M^r: Smith's account, is equally dull & proud. Where Pride &

line 22: 'may' inserted before 'form' at beginning of MS line. // line 29: 'heavy' deleted; 'dull' inserted above line.

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LADY SUSAN *Letter 5.*

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 5.

Lady Susan to M^{rs} Johnson

Churchill

I received your note my dear Alicia, just before I left Town, & rejoice to be assured that M^r 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 M^r 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

LADY SUSAN *Letter 5.*

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.¹—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.² But they do not know what to do with their fortune, 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 her Children; I know all their names already, & am going to attach myself with the greatest sensibility³ 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