

Correspondence between

John Randolph or Roanoke [1814, Oct. 31] Sheets 2-5

and

Ann C. [Nancy Randolph] Morris [1815, Jan. 18] " 6-17

[Typescript, carbon copy, 17 sheets]

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INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1826, when I was a boy of 14, my uncle, on his return from the General Court in Richmond, (Judge Peter Johnson) related to my father, in my presence, the particulars of the affair that gave rise to the following correspondence between John Randolph and his cousin, Mrs. Gouvernor Morris. There was in it so much of the strange, even mysterious, that the recital made a strong impression on my mind, and when told some years ago that these two letters were in existence, I felt a great desire to possess myself of them. Accident has recently placed them in my hands.

On the trial of the suit respecting John Randolph's will before the General Court in 1834, they were introduced as proof of his insanity. Several of the Judges took copies (Judge Saunders among them) and the following is a transcript made by me from his copy.

In order to afford a better understanding of the whole affair I will here detail what I remember of the recital. John Randolph had two brothers, Richard and Theoderick. The latter died in early manhood. Richard married his cousin, Judy Randolph, who had a sister Nancy, the authress of the following letters. This Nancy Randolph lived in the family of her sister and cousin for some time after their marriage, and her society was much courted, she being universally regarded as a woman of the first order of mind and manners. Suddenly, in 1792, before the least suspicion of such a thing had entered anybody's mind, she left the house with Richard Randolph, and at the house of Randolph Harrison gave birth to a child. Traces of blood were seen from the room she occupied, down the stairs, to a pile of shingles in the yard. There were some other reasons for supposing that the child had been made away with. A legal examination took place, but the evidence was not sufficiently strong to convict either Nancy or Richard, it not being proved that the child was a living one when born. Every witness examined was a near relative of the accused. Some very strong circumstances were adduced against them, and though they were acquitted of the charge of infanticide, the preponderance of public opinion at the time was unfavorable to their innocence of the double crime of incest and murder. It will be seen that Nancy admits the fact of criminal intercourse with Theoderick, and gives him the paternity of the child. Many thought however that Richard was the real father.

(Copy of Correspondence)

Greenwich St. Oct. 31st, 1814

Madam:

When at my departure from Morrisania, in your sister's presence, I bade you "remember the past", I was not apprised of the whole extent of your guilty machinations. I had nevertheless seen and heard enough in the course of my short visit to satisfy me that your own dear experience had added nothing toward the amendment of your life. My object was to let you know that the eye of man as well as that of God, whom you seek not, was upon you; to impress upon your mind a sense of your duty toward your husband, and, if possible, to raise some dormant spark of virtue, if haply any such should slumber in your bosom. The heart of the most hardened criminal has, by a sudden stroke, been sometimes alarmed into contrition and penitence. Yours, I perceive, is not made of "penetrable stuff". Unhappy woman, why will you tempt the forbearance of that Maker, who has perhaps permitted you to run your course of vice and sin that you may feel it to be a life of wretchedness, alarm, and suspicion? You now live in the daily and nightly dread of discovery. Detection itself can hardly be worse. Some of the proofs of your guilt (you know to which I allude) those which in despair you sent me through Dr. Meade on your leaving Va., those proofs I say, had not been used against you, had you not falsely used my name in imposing on the generous man to whose arms you have brought pollution; to whom, next to my unfortunate brother, you are most indebted; whom, next to him, you have most deeply injured. You told Mr. Morris that I had offered you marriage subsequent to your arraignment for the most horrible of crimes, when you were conscious that I never at any time made such proposals. You have, therefore, released me from my implied obligations (with me it would have been sacred, notwithstanding you laid no injunction on me provided you had respected my name, and decently discharged your duties to your husband), to withhold the papers from the inspection of all except my family. I laid them before Tudor soon after they came into my hands, with the story of his father's wrongs and your crime. But to return, you represented to Mr. Morris that I had offered you marriage. Your habitual and inveterate disregard for truth has been too well known to me for many years to cause any surprise on my part at this or any other falsehood that you may coin to serve a turn. In like manner you instigated Mr. Morris to write to the Chief Justice, whom you knew to have been misled with respect to the transaction at Randolph Harrison's, and who knew no more of your general and subsequent course than the son of Richard Randolph, Archbishop of Canterbury. Cunning and guilt are no match for wisdom and truth, yet you persevere in your wicked course. Your apprehension for the life of your child first flashed conviction on my mind that your hands had deprived of life that of which you were delivered in October 1792 at Randolph Harrison's. This child, to interest his feelings in its behalf, you told my brother Richard (when you intrusted to him the secret of your pregnancy and implored him to hide your shame) was begotten by my brother Theoderick, who died at Bizarre of a long decline the preceding February. You knew long before his death, (near a year) that he was reduced to a skeleton;

that he was unable to walk, and that his bones had worn through his skin. Such was the inviting object whose bed, (according to your own account) you sought, and with whom, to use your own phrase, you played "Alonzo and Cora"; and to screen the character of such a creature was the life and fame of the most generous and gallant of men put into jeopardy. He passed his word, and the pledge was redeemed at the hazard of all that men hold dear -- domestic peace, reputation and life, -- all suffered but the latter. His hand received the burden, bloody from the womb, and already lifeless. Who stifled its cries? God only knows, and you. His hand consigned it to an uncoffined grave. To the prudence of Randolph Harrison, who disqualified himself from giving evidence by refraining from a search under the pile of shingles, some of which were marked with blood, to his cautious conduct it is owing, that my brother did not perish with you on the same gibbet, and that the foul stain of incest and murder is not indelibly stamped on his memory, and associated with the idea of his offspring. Your alleged reason for not declaring the truth (fear of your brothers) does not hold against a disclosure to his wife (your sister) to whom he was not allowed to impart the secret. But her own observation supplied all defects of positive information; and had you been first proceeded against at law, your sister being a competent witness, you must have been convicted, and the conviction of her husband would have followed as a necessary consequence; for who could have believed your sister to have been insincere in her declaration that she suspected no criminal intercourse between her husband and yourself? When some years ago I imparted to her the facts (she had a right to know them) she expressed no surprise, but only said she was always satisfied in her own mind it was so. My brother died suddenly in June 1796, only three years after his trial. I was from home. Tudor, because he believed you was capable of anything, imparted to me the morning I left Morrisania his misgivings lest you might have been the perpetrator of that act, and when I found your mind running on poisoning and murders, I too had my former misgivings strengthened. If I am wrong I ask forgiveness of God and even of you. A dose of medicine was the cause of his death. When he was no more, you gave a loose rein to your inordinate passions. Mrs. Dudley, to whom my brother had offered an asylum in his home, who descended from his own mother's sister, you drove away. Your quarrels with your own sister, before fierce and angry, now knew no bounds, and you forced her to turn you out of doors that you might have some plausible reason for quitting Bizarre. But after what my poor brother had been made to suffer in mind, body and estate, after her own sufferings as wife and widow, from your machinations, it was not worth while to try to save anything from the wreck of his happiness. She endured you as well as she could, and you poured on. But your intimacy with one of the slaves, "Your dear Billy Ellis" (thus you commenced your letter to this dusky Othello) attracted notice. You could stay no longer at Bizarre. You abandoned it under plea of ill usage, and after various shiftings of your quarters you threw yourself on the humanity of Capt. and Mr. Murrey (never appealed to in vain) and you here made a bold stroke for a husband at Dr. Meade. Foiled in this game, your

advances became so immodest that you had to leave Grove Brook. You afterwards took lodgings at Pryor's (a public garden), whither I sent by your sister's request, and in her name, one hundred dollars. You returned them by bearer, Tudor then a school boy, because sent in her name, which you covered with obloquy. But to George Tucker you resented that I had sent this money, suppressing your sister's name, and he asked me if I was not going to see "poor Nancy"; You then sent me a direct message, and I went. You were at that time fastidiously neat and so was the apartment. I now see why the bank note was returned, but the bait did not take. I left the apartment, and never beheld you more until in Washington as the wife of Mr. Morris. Your subsequent amours with the players, your "decline into a very drab", I was informed of by a friend in Richmond. You left Va., whether made a condition of your vagrancy, I know not; but the Gov. would not, as I heard, suffer you to associate with his wife. From Rhode Island you wrote to me begging for money. I did not answer your letter. Mr. Sturgis from Connecticut, with whom you formed an acquaintance, and with whom you corresponded, often brought me messages from you. He knows how coldly they were received. When Mr. Morris brought you to Washington, he knew I held aloof from you. I went at his instance, who asked me if I intended to mortify his wife by not visiting her. I repeated my visit to ascertain whether change of circumstances had made any change in your conduct. I was led to hope that you had seen your errors, and was smoothing his passage through life, and knowledge that he had the stuff in his own hands, and a mistaken idea of his character, (for I had not done justice to the kindness of his nature) justified this hope. Let me say that when I heard of your living with Mr. Morris as his housekeeper, I was glad of it, as the means of keeping you from viciousness, considering him as a perfect man of the world, who, in country or cities, at home or abroad, had been in vain assailed by female blandishments. The idea of his marrying you never entered my mind. Another conviction did. My first intimation of that marriage was its announcement in the newspapers. I then thought Mr. Morris, being a travelling man, might have formed his taste on a foreign model. Silence was my only course. Chance has again thrown you under my observation. What do I see? A vampire, that, after sucking the best blood of my race, has flitted off to the North and struck its harpy fangs into an infirm old man. To what condition have you reduced him? Have you made him a prisoner in his own house, that there may be no witnesses of your lewd amours? Or have you driven away his friends or old domestics that there may be no witnesses of his death? Or, do you mean to force him to Europe, where he would be yet more at your mercy; and, dropping the badge to a highway man, rid yourself of incumbrance at once? "Uncle", said Tudor, "If Mr. Morris' eyes are ever opened, it will be through the child, whom, in spite of all her grimaces in her husband's presence, 'tis easy to see she cares nothing for except as an instrument of power. How shocking she looks. I have not met her eyes three times since I have been in the house. My first impression of her character, as far back as I can remember, was that she was an unchaste woman. My brother knew her even better than I did. She could never do anything with him."

I have done. Before this reaches your eyes it will have been perused by him to whom, next to my unfortunate brother, you are most indebted, and whom, next to him, you have most deeply injured. If he be not both blind and deaf he must sooner or later unmask you, unless he too die of the "cramp in his stomach". You understand me. If I were persuaded that his life were safe in your custody, I might forbear from making this communication to him. Repent before it is too late. May I hear of that repentance, and never see you more.

John Randolph.

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Morrisania, Jan. 18th, 1815

Sir:

My husband communicated to me yesterday for the first time your letter of last October, together with that which accompanied it, addressed to himself. In your letter to my husband you say, "I wish I could withhold this blow, but I must in your case do what, under a change of circumstances, I would have you do to me." This, sir, seems fair and friendly. It seems as if you wish to apprise Mr. Morris, and him only, of circumstances important to his happiness and honor, tho' fatal to my reputation, leaving it in his power to cover them in oblivion, or display them to the world as a means of freeing himself from a monster unfit to live. But this was mere "seeming". Your real object was wholly different. Under the pretense of consulting Commodore Decatur and Mr. Blacker, you communicated your slander to them, and then to Mr. Ogden. You afterwards displayed them to Mr. Wilkins, who, having heard them spoken of in the city, called on me to know what foundation they rested on. How many more you may have published your malicious tale to, I do not know; but I venture to ask whether this be conduct which, under a change of circumstances, you would have others pursue towards you.

You have professed a sense of gratitude for obligations you supposed my husband to have laid you under -- was the attempt to blacken my character and destroy his peace and happiness a fair return? There are many other questions that will occur to all candid minds on the perusal of your letter. For instance, did you believe these slanders? If you did, why did you permit your nephew to be fed from my bounty and nursed by my care during nearly three months? Could you suppose him safe in the power of a wretch who had murdered his father? Does it consist with the dignified pride of family you affect, to leave one whom you announce as your heir, and destined to support your name, dependent on the charity of a negro's concubine? You say I confine my husband a prisoner in order that there may be no witnesses to my lewd amours and have driven away his old friends and domestics that there may be no witnesses of his death. If I wished to indulge in amours the natural course would be to mingle in the pleasures and amusements of the city; or, at least, to induce my husband to go abroad and leave me a clear stage for such misdemeanors. Was it with the view to multiply witnesses for my ill conduct that you published tales tendering, as far as they are believed, to make his house a solitude? It cannot escape observation that you take on you to assume things, which, had they existed, you could not know. Thus, you say your brother "passed his word, and the pledge was redeemed at the hazard of all that man can hold dear". Pray, sir, admitting (which is not a fact) that I had exacted from your brother a promise of secrecy, how could you have known it unless he betrayed it? And if he betrayed it, how was the pledge redeemed? Again, you say that I instigated Mr. Morris to write to the Chief Justice whom I knew to be misled. Had the instigation been a fact, how could you have come to a knowledge of it. Like many other things in your letter, it happens to be a downright falsehood, and

is therefore a just standard for him to estimate the rest of your assertions. Permit me to observe also, that it is also an additional proof of your intention to spread your slanders abroad; for, had you meant to communicate information to Mr. Morris, you would not have hazarded such a charge. People of proper feeling require that the evidence of accusation be strong in proportion as the guilt is enormous, but those who feel themselves capable of committing the blackest of crimes will readily support others, or condemn without proof, on hearsay, on the suggestion of disturbed imagination or instigation of malicious hearts. Those who possess a clear conscience and sound mind will look through your letter for some proof of guilt. They will look in vain. They will find indeed that you have thought proper to cite suspicion on suspicion of your nephew; and with no better evidence, you have the insolence to impute to me crime at which nature revolts. You will perhaps say that you mentioned a piece of evidence in your possession, a letter which I wrote on leaving Va. So far as that goes it must be admitted. But permit me to tell you that the nature of it destroys your credibility with all honorable minds. To say, as you do, that I laid no injunction of secrecy, will strike such minds as a pitiful evasion. If you had the feelings of a man of honor you would have known that there are things, the very communication of which involves that injunction. You have heard of the principle, and pretend to justify the breach of confidence by my want of respect of your name. But you acknowledge that you communicated the information to my sister and her son Tudor (then a boy eleven years old) shortly after you became possessed of it. Thus was my reputation, as far as it lay in your power, committed to the discretion of a woman and a child, many years before this imputed want of respect for your name. Your name! Jack Randolph --, now "John Randolph of Roanoke"! It was, then, a want of respect for this great John Randolph of Roanoke to say that he had done the honor of offering his hand to his poor cousin Nancy. I shall take more notice of this in its proper place, and only add here that among the respectable people of Va. this affectation of greatness must cover you with ridicule. But to return, this breach of confidence, without which you would not have the slightest evidence to support your slanders, is sufficient to impeach your statement in respect to whatever you have said as of your own knowledge. While, in the chapter of self-consideration (which, with all due respect to Mr. John Randolph of Roanoke, make up the history of his life) I must notice a piece of evidence, not indeed contained in your letter, but written by your hand. I have already alluded to the indelicacy of leaving your nephew so long in my care, with a view of making observations, which no person can fail to make on conduct so extraordinary in itself, and so inconsistent with the charge you make against me, you pretend to have discovered all at once (in the house) the confirmation of your suspicions; but surely the suspicion was sufficient to prevent a person having the least pretense to decency from subjecting himself to such obligation. One word, however, as to the sudden discovery made by your great sagacity. Recollect, sir, when you rose from the table to leave Morrisania, you put in my husband's hands a note to my sister expressing your

willingness that she and her son should spend the winter in his house. Surely the discovery must have been made at that time, if at all. You will recollect, too, some other marks of confidence and affection, and acts of respect also which I forbear to mention because you would, no doubt, deny them, and it would be invidious to ask the testimony of those who were present. One act, however, must not be unnoticed. It speaks too plain a language to be misunderstood, and was too notorious to be denied. When you entered this house and left it, you took me in your arms; you pressed me to your bosom; you imprinted upon my lips a kiss, which I received as a token of friendship and affection from a near relative. Did you not believe that you held in your arms; that you pressed to your bosom; that you kissed the lips of a common prostitute; the murderess of her own child and of your brother. Go, tell this to the world that scorn may be at no loss for an object! If you did not believe it, make out a certificate that John Randolph of Roanoke is a base calumniator. But no, you may spare yourself the trouble; it is already written. It lies before me, and I now proceed to notice what it contains in a more particular manner.

And, first, sir, as to the fact communicated shortly before I left Va. That your brother, Theoderick, paid his addresses to me, you knew, and attempted to supplant him by calumny. Be pleased to remember that in my sister Mary's house at Presquille, you led me to the portico, and leaning against one of the pillars, expressed your surprise at having heard from your brother Richard that I was engaged to marry his brother Theoderick; that you hoped it was not true, for he was unworthy of me. To establish this opinion, you made many assertions derogatory to his reputation, some of which I knew to be false. Recollect, afterwards, that on one of those occasions not infrequent, when your violent temper hurried you into unpleasant situations, you, in a letter to your brother Richard, declared you were unconscious of having done anything at all that could offend me, unless it was that conversation, excusing it as an act of heroic sacrifice like that of his own son by Brutus, for which I ought to applaud you. The defamation of your brother, whom I loved; your stormy passions, your mean selfishness, your wretched appearance, rendered your attentions disagreeable. Your brother Richard, a model of truth and honor, knew how much I was annoyed by them. He knew of the letters with which you pestered me from Philadelphia, until one of them was returned in a blank cover, while I was absent from my father's house. By whom it was done I know not, for I never considered it of sufficient importance to inquire. It was your troublesome attentions which induced Richard to inform you of my engagement. At that time, my father had other views. Your property, as well as that of your brother, was, you know, hampered by a British debt. My father, therefore, preferred for my husband a person of clear and considerable estate. The sentiment of my heart did not accord with his intentions. I was left at Bizarre under these circumstances, a girl, not seventeen, with the man she loved. I was betrothed to him and considered him as my husband. He was my husband in the presence of that God whose name you seem to invoke on occasions most trivial and for purposes the most

malevolent. We should have been married if death had not snatched him away a few days after the scene which begun the history of my sorrows. Your brother Richard knew every circumstance, but you are mistaken in supposing I exacted from him a promise of secrecy. He was a man of honor. Neither the foul imputation against us both, circulated by that kind of friendship you have shown my husband, or the awful scene to which he was afterwards called; called as an accomplice in the horrible crime with which you attempt to blacken his memory, to induce him to betray the sister of his wife, the wife of his brother. I repeat it, the crime with which you attempt to blacken his memory. You say that to screen the character of such a creature as I am, the life and the fame of "that most generous and gallant of men was put in jeopardy". His life, alas, is beyond the reach of your malice. But his fame, which should be dear to a brother's heart, is stabbed by the hand of his brother. You not only charge me with the heinous crime of infanticide, placing him in the condition of an accomplice, but you proceed to say that had it not been for the prudence of Mr. Harrison, or the mismanagement of not first putting me upon my trial, "we both should have been swung on the same gibbet, and the foul stain of incest and murder been stamped on his memory and associated with the idea of his offspring". This, sir, is the language you presume to use and address to me, enclosed in a cover to my husband for his inspection, after already having communicated it to other people. I will, for a moment, put myself on the question and suppose the charge to be true. What must be the indignation of every feeling heart to behold a wretch rake up the ashes of a deceased brother to blast his fame? Who is there of nerve so strong, as not to shudder at the savage regret that we did not "swing from the same gibbet"? I well remember, and you cannot have forgotten, that when sitting at the hospitable board of your venerable father you threw a knife at your brother's head, and if passion had not diverted the aim he would have been much earlier consigned to the grave, and you much earlier met the doom which awaits your murderous disposition. It was hoped indeed that age and reflection had subdued your native barbarity. But setting aside the evidence which your letter contains, and the earnestness with which you disclosed in the presence of Col. Morris, and his brother, the Commodore, to shoot a British soldier; to bear off his scalp and hang it as an ornament in your house in Roanoke, shows that you still have the heart of a savage. I ask not of you, but the candid world, whether a man like you is worthy of belief.

On the melancholy occasion you have thought proper to bring forward, there was the strictest examination. Neither your brother nor myself had anything to excite enmity; yet we were subjected to an un pitying examination, the most severe scrutiny made; you know it. We were acquitted, to the joy of the numerous spectators, expressed in shouts of exultation. This, sir, passed in a remote county of Virginia, more than twenty years ago. You have revived the slanderous tale in the most populous city in the United States. For what? To repay my kindness to your nephew, by tearing me from the arms

of my husband, and blasting the prospects of my child, -- poor innocent baby now playing at my feet, unconscious of his mother's wrong. But it seems that my apprehension for his life just flashed conviction to your mind that my own hand had deprived of life that of which I was delivered in October 1792. You ought to have said the last of September. You must, Mr. Randolph, have an extra ordinary kind of apprehension if my love for one child can induce you to believe the destruction of another. But waiving this absurdity, you acknowledge that every fact that had come to your knowledge, every circumstance you had either heard or dreamed of in a long period of more than twenty years, has never imported to you a belief which, nevertheless, you expected to imprint in the minds of others. You then pay to the rest of mankind the wretched compliment of supposing them more ready to believe the greatest crimes, than John Randolph of Roanoke. Doubtless there are some who are worthy of the odious distinction, I hope not many. I hope too, as to the more rational part of the community, you will wait before you will require their faith until some such flash shall have enlightened their minds. Mark here, for your future government, the absurdity to which falsehood and malice inevitably lead a calumniator. They have driven you, while you attempt to palliate inconsistency of conduct into palpable self-contradiction. Sensible as you must be that no respectable person can overlook the baseness of leaving your nephew so long, or of even permitting him to come under the roof of the wretch you describe me to be, you are compelled to acknowledge that you did not believe in the enormities you charge until you had yourself paid a visit to Morrisania. Thus you not only invalidate everything like evidence to support your criminations, formed on circumstances which produce an effect, (if they operate at all) directly opposite to that for which they are cited. You have, sir, on this subject presumed to use my sister's name. Permit me to say I do not believe a word you say. Were it true, it is only immaterial. But that it is not true, I have perfect conviction. The assertion must rest only on your testimony, the weight and value of which have already been examined. The contradiction is contained in her last letter to me dated December 17th. of which I enclose a copy. You will observe that she cautions me against believing anything inconsistent with her gratitude for my kindness, and assures me that although prevented from spending the winter with us, she is proud of the honor done her by the invitation. With the letter before me I should feel it an insult to her, as well as an indignity to myself, if I made any observation on your filthy slander respecting my conduct at Bizarre. No one can think so meanly of a woman who moves in the sphere of a lady as to suppose she could be proud of the honor of being invited to spend the winter with the concubine of one of her slaves. Nevertheless, though I disdain an answer to such foul imputations, I am determined that they shall appear in the neighborhood under your hand, so that your character shall be fully shown and your signature forever hereafter be not only known for what it has hitherto been, the appendage of vain glorious boasting, but the designation of malicious baseness. You say that I drove Mrs. Dudley from my sister's house. A falsehood more absurd could not have been

invented. She left the house the day before your brother was buried. I shall not enter into a detail of circumstances but this assertion shall also be communicated to the neighborhood. It is well that your former constituents should know the creature in whom they have put their trust. Virginians in general, whatever may have been their defects, have a high sense of honor. You speak with affected sensibilities of my sister's domestic bliss, and you assume an air of indignation at the violence of my temper. Be pleased to recollect that, returning from a morning ride with your brother, you told me that you found it would not do to interfere between man and wife; that you had recommended him a journey to Connecticut to obtain a divorce; that he made no reply, or spoke a word afterwards. Recollect, too, how often, and before how many persons you have disclosed your detestation of her conduct as a wife and of her angry passions. One form of expression occurs to me, which is remarkable. "I have heard", you said, "that Mrs. Randolph was handsome, and had I seen her perhaps in a good humor, I might have thought so; but her features are so disturbed by constant wrath that she has to me the air of a fury". And now as to my disposition and conduct, be pleased not to forget, (for people of a certain sort ought to have memories) that during the full five years after your brother's death, and how much longer I know not, I was the constant theme of your praise, and though you wearied everyone else, you seemed on that subject to be yourself indefatigable. I should not say these things if they merely rested on my own knowledge, for you would not hesitate to deny them, and I should be very sorry that my credibility should be placed on the same level with yours. You have addressed me as a notorious liar, to which I make no other answer than the assurance that this, like your other charges, shall be communicated to those who know us both. You will easily anticipate their decision. In the meantime it may not be amiss to refresh your memory with one sample of your veracity. There are many who remember that while you were always under mortgage for the British debt, your philanthropic assertion that you would make them (your slaves) free and provide wives for them, with this prospect you worried all that would listen to you; when, by the sale of some of them, a part of the debt was discharged and an agreement to pay the rest by installments, you changed your mind. This was not inexcusable; but when you set up as a representative in Congress, and the plan to liberate your slaves was objected to in your district against your election, you published, to the astonishment of the members who had heard you discuss your liberal intention, that you never had any such idea. Thus your first step in public life was marred with falsehood. On entering the door of Congress you became an outrageous patriot. Nothing in the French Revolution was too immoral for your taste and applause. Washington and Britain were the objects of your obloquy. This patriotic fervor lasted until after the conclusion of Mr. Chase's trial, from which you returned complaining of your fatigue and of your public labors. But elated with the prospects of a foreign mission, as usual, you rode your new hobby to the annoyance of all, who, like myself, were obliged to listen. Your expected voyage

enchanted you so much that you could not help talking about it even to your dear nephew. "Tom, my boy, we shall be sailing over the Atlantic". But all at once you became silent and seemed in deep melancholy. It appeared soon after that Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison, knowing your character, had positively declined compliance with your wishes. A new scene was opened. You became a patriot double-distilled, and founded your claim to the confidence of new friends by the breach of that which had been reposed in you by your old ones. I know not what others may think as to the treacherous disclosure of Mr. Madison's declaration that "The French need money and must have it", but it is no slight evidence of his correct conduct in general that you had nothing else to betray. With the same insensibility of shame which marks your allegations, you have denied the fact of turning me out of doors. This also shall be known in the neighborhood where it must be well remembered. I take the liberty again to refresh your memory. Shortly after your nephew, whom I had nursed several weeks in a dangerous disease at hazard of my life, had left home to take the benefit of a change of air, you came in the room one morning after you had been a long time in the chamber with my sister, and said, addressing yourself to me, "Nancy, when do you leave this house? The sooner the better for you take as many liberties as if you were at a tavern". On this occasion, as on many others, my course was silent submission. I was poor and I was dependent. I knew that the house was kept in part at your expense. I could not therefore appeal to my sister. I replied with the humility suitable for my forlorn condition, "I will go as soon as I can". You stalked haughtily about the room, and poor, unprotected "Nancy" retired to seek the relief of tears.

Every assertion of yours respecting my visit to Grove Brooke is false. Mr. Murray cannot but acknowledge that I went there with Judge Johnson (in his carriage) on my way to Hanover, after repeated invitations from his family, conveyed in letters from his daughters. That I left them in the chariot of my friend Mr. Swann. That they not only pressed me to prolong my stay, but to repeat my visit. Of this, Mr. Curd, a gentleman sent by Mr. Swann to escort me, was a witness. You were unfortunáte in what passed two years after when I saw you in Richmond. But before I refresh your memory on that subject I must notice another malicious falsehood respecting my residence while in Richmond. You say that I took lodging at Pryer's, "A public garden". It is true that Mr. Pryer owned a large lot in Richmond in which public balls and entertainments were given, and this lot was a public garden. But it is equally true that Mr. Pryer's dwelling and enclosure around it were wholly distinct from that garden. In that house I lodged. My chamber was directly over Mrs. Pryer's, a lady of as good birth as John Randolph, and of far more correct principles. "All this, sir, you perfectly well know. From that chamber I wrote you a note, complaining that your nephew, then a schoolboy in Richmond, was not permitted to visit me. You sent it back, after writing on the same that "I return your note that you may compare it with my answer and ask yourself if you are not unjust to me, who through life have been your friend." This, with the recital of your profession of

regard, made to my friend Lucy Randolph, and her husband's brother Ryland, led me to suppose that you had acted only as my sister's agent in the last scene at Bizarre. I therefore wrote to you remonstrating against the reason you assigned for turning me out of doors, which you knew yourself to be unfounded, for you had often observed that I was "Epicene, the silent woman". You knew that I was continually occupied with my meals, or other work for the house, obeying to the best of my knowledge the orders I received, differing from any other servant only in this, that I received no wages, and was permitted to sit at the table, where I did not dare to enter into any conversation or taste wine, and very seldom even of tea or coffee. I gave my letter, open, to Ryland Randolph, to be put by him in your hands. I pause here, sir, to ask whether on receipt of this letter you pretended to deny having turned me out of doors. You dare not say so. You shortly afterwards paid me a visit, the only one during your stay. You sat on my bedstead. I cannot say bed, for I had none. I was too poor. When weary, my limbs were rested on a blanket spread over the sacking. Your visit was long, and I never saw you from that time till we met in Washington. Some days afterward you sent your nephew to offer me \$100.00 on the part of his mother. I supposed this to be a turn of delicacy, for had you been the bearer of money from her you would have delivered it when in my chamber, and given me every needful assurance of the quarter from whence it came. But let it have come from whom it may, my feelings were too indignant to receive the boon at the hands of those by whom I had been so grievously wounded. I readily conceived, sir, that this must have appeared inexplicable to you, for it must be very difficult for you to understand how a person in my condition would refuse money from any quarter. It is true that afterwards while in Newport, suffering from want, and borne down by severe ague and fever, I was so far humbled as to request, not the gift, not the gift (I would sooner have perished) but the loan of half that sum. My petition fell on a cold heart that emitted no sound. You did not deign to reply. You even made a boast of your silence. I was then so far off that my groans could not be heard in Virginia. You no longer apprehended the reproaches which had prompted your ostentatious letter at Richmond. Yes sir, you were silent. You possessed the letter on which you ground your calumnies. You supposed me so much in your power that I would not dare complain of your unkindness. Yes sir, you were silent, and you left your nephew nearly three months dependent upon the charity of her, to whom in extremity of wretchedness you had refused the loan of \$50.00. Perhaps you hoped that the poor, forlorn creature you had turned out of doors, would, under the pressure of want, and removed from every friend, be driven to the vicious course, and thus enable you to adjust your barbarity with charges such as you have now invented.

You say you were informed of my "association with the players and my decline into a very drab" by a friend in Richmond. Your letter shall be read in Richmond. You must produce that friend unless you are willing to father the falsehood, which in Richmond will be notorious. I defy you, Mr. Randolph, to substantiate by the

testimony of any credible witness, a single fact injurious to my reputation from the time you turned me out of doors until the present hour. And yet, God knows, if suffering could have driven me to vice, there was no want of suffering.

My husband, in permitting me to write this letter, has enjoined me not to mention his kindness, otherwise I could give you a detail of circumstances, which, as they would not involve any pecuniary claim on you, might touch even your heart. You speak of him as an infirm old man, in whom I have "struck the fangs of a harpy", after having acted in your family the part of a vampire: I pray you to be persuaded, Mr. John Randolph of Roanoke, that such idle declamations, though they may become a schoolboy to his aunt and cousins, is misplaced on the present occasion. You know as little of the manner in which my present connection began as of the other things with which you pretend to be acquainted. I loved my husband before he made me his wife, and I love him still more now that he has made me the mother of one of the finest boys you ever saw. Now that his kindness soothes the anguish that I cannot but feel from your unmanly attack. I am sorry that I am obliged to speak of your nephew. I would fain impute to his youth, or some other excuse, his unnatural and I must say criminal conduct. I hope the strength of my constitution; the consolation that I derive from the few friends that are left, and caresses of my beloved babe, will enable me to resist the measures taken for my destruction by him and his uncle. That his declaration rested on your testimony alone, was made in Mr. Ogden's presence. This young man received several small sums of money which I sent him unasked while he remained at Cambridge. Early in April, in a letter which he addressed to me as his "Dear Aunt", he requested me to lend him \$30.00 or \$40.00. I did not imitate the example you had set, but immediately enclosed a check payable to his order for \$30.00. I heard no more of him to the end of July, when a letter dated in Providence announced his intention to see me at Morrisania. At the same time a letter to my husband mentioned the dangerous condition of his health. On the 4th of August, a phaeton drove up to the door, with a led horse, and a person appearing to be a servant stepped out and inquired for Mr. Randolph. He was directed to the stable, and soon afterwards Mr. Randolph landed from the boat of a packet. His appearance bespoke severe illness. I showed him to his chamber and venture to say that from that time to the moment of his departure he was treated by me with the tenderness and kindness of a mother. The injunctions I have mentioned restrain me from going into details. My health suffered by the fatigue to which I was exposed, the burden of which I could not diminish without neglecting him, for I could not procure a good nurse or servant. My husband's health too was impaired, I believe, by the confinement this youth occasioned. We were prevented from a journey we were about to make for air and exercise among the mountains of New Jersey. We were also under the disagreeable necessity of keeping a servant whom our friends had denounced as a thief. By the bye, I have reason to believe he is one of the "ancient domestics" you have taken under your protection. If so, I must in justice to myself inform you that your

friend George Farris, dismissed only two days before your arrival, was shortly afterwards admitted (for theft) to a lodging in the Bridewell of New York.

I had an opportunity, indeed I was made by my laundress to observe, that your nephew, though driving his phaeton, with a servant on horseback, had not a pair of stockings fit to wear. His man, Jonathan, too, dunning him in my presence, proved that he had not the means to pay his servant's wages. At one time in particular, passing the door, I heard Jonathan ask for money, and my heart prompted me to offer relief; as I entered the room for that purpose (it was two days after a violent hemorrhage that threatened his life) he was rising feebly from his bed, and when I mentioned my object, said in tremulous voice, "My dear aunt, I was coming to ask you". I bade his servant follow me, and gave him five dollars. Tudor had returned me the thirty dollars first borrowed, but shortly afterwards increased the debt by ten dollars, as I supposed to furnish his travelling companion, Mr. Bruce, with the means of returning home. A few days after that I furnished him with an additional twenty dollars, which I gave Hackings; and before his departure sent thirty dollars to one of Mr. Morris' nieces to purchase handkerchiefs which he wanted, which his mother said he could not afford to buy. The evening you left Morrisania I received a note from that lady excusing herself from not executing my commission by reason of the death of a cousin, returning the money because she understood my sister was to go next Tuesday. You witnessed my surprise at receiving such information in such a way, and will recollect what followed. After your departure I communicated the note to your nephew, and told him as he was going to town he could purchase the handkerchiefs for himself. I gave him thirty dollars, which he put in his pocket and thanked me. Two days afterwards, when in town, he said to me, "Aunt, I wish you would choose the handkerchiefs for yourself, I shall value them more". He forgot, however, to return the money. I purchased the handkerchiefs, together with a merene tippet to protect his chest, and again received his thanks, which was reiterated by his mother at Mrs. Ogden's. The debt, amounting to sixty dollars, she paid at Morrisania. The thirty dollars was enclosed in her note dated Saturday morning, of which I herewith send you a copy, together with that of November third from Philadelphia.

And now, sir, put the actual parties out of the question, and what credit is due to the calumnies of a person in your nephew's situation, soliciting and receiving favors to the very last moment? Let me add, that after having poured his slanders in your ear, or repeated them for your delectation, he left me to discharge one of the doctor's bills, which indeed I offered to pay, and received his thanks in advance. Is it proper, is it decent to found horrid calumnies on the suspicions of such a creature, even supposing them to have originated in his own mind, and not to have been, as is too probable, instigated by you? Could anything but the most determined and inveterate malice induce anyone above the level of an idiot to believe any fact which he pretended to articulate?

Who can believe me cruel to my child, when it is notorious that my fault is too great indulgence; that my weakness is too great solicitude; and that I have been laughed at for instance of maternal care by which my health was impaired?

You cited as from him these words, "How shocking she looks! I have not met her eyes three times since I have been in the house." Can you believe this? Can you expect others to believe it? How happens it you did not cry out as anyone else would have done, "Why did you stay in the house?" To such an apostrophe he might have replied, "Uncle, I could not have helped it. I was penniless, in daily expectation that you or my mother would bring relief. When she came at last I found her almost as ill as myself. We were both detained until your arrival." To this excuse, which is a very lame one for a person who had a phaeton to sell or pledge, anyone who feels a spark of generosity in his bosom would reply, "Why, then, wretch, having from necessity or choice laid yourself under such a load of obligations, did you become the calumniator of your benefactress?" Or have you at the early age of 19, been taught to combine profound hypocrisy with the dignity of hate, and assume the mask of love that you may more surely aim the assassin's dagger? Where did you learn these horrible lessons? This last, sir, would have been a dangerous question on your part. He might have replied, and may yet live to reply, "Uncle, I learned them from you". But, to return to this wonderful circumstance, that this young man has not met my eyes above once a month, though he saw me frequently every day. That he met them seldomer than I wished is true. I was sorry to observe, what others remarked, that he rarely looked anyone in the face. I excused this sinister air to myself, and tried to excuse it to others, as a proof of uncommon modesty, of which, nevertheless, he gave no other proof. I sometimes succeeded in my endeavors to make people believe that this gloomy, guilty look proceeded from bashfulness. I know not, and I shall not pretend to guess, what heavy matters pressed upon his conscience. Perhaps it was only the disposition to be a criminal. At present, that he has an opportunity (with your assistance) to gratify that disposition, he will I presume be less capable of the air of any honest man. He will probably find himself frequently, on leaving good company, in a condition to repeat the same sentence, "Uncle, I have not met their eyes three times since I have been in the house".

You make him say, "My first impression as far back as I can recollect, was that she was an unchaste woman. My brother knew her better than I. She never could do anything with him." This, too, is admirable testimony to support your filthy accusation. Pray, Mr. John Randolph of Roanoke, why did you not inform your audience, that when you turned me out of doors this Mr. Tudor Randolph was but nine years of age, and his brother, poor deaf and dumb St. George, just thirteen? Can it be possible to add to your confusion by a single remark? It seems to me that if anyone present at your wild declaration had noticed this fact, you would have been hissed even by a sisterhood of old maids. Unluckily for you, I have letters

from poor Saint George, one of which written shortly before his late malady, is filled with assurances of attachment. In that which I received while I was in Washington, he makes particular and affectionate inquiries respecting Col. Morris' family. These show that he does not participate in your ingratitude, but feels as he ought the kindness of that gentleman, who, at your instance, took him into the family in London. You repay this favor with slanders which I have the charity to believe you are too polite to pronounce in the Colonel's presence. I have a letter from my sister telling me of the pleasure that St. George derived from the present I made him of my portrait, which you carried out with your own. By this act you acquired some right to it, and should my present ill health lead me to the grave, you may hang it up on your castle in Roanoke, next to the Englishman's scalp, a trophy of family prowess.

I observe, sir, in the course of your letter, an allusion to one of Shakespeare's best tragedies. I trust by this time you are convinced that you have clumsily performed the part of honest Iago. Happily for your life, and my peace, you did not find in him a headlong, rash Othello. For a full and proper description of what you have written and spoken on this occasion, I refer you to the same admirable author. He will tell you, "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

Ann C. Morris.