

Penelope Maitland to Charlotte West

2 April 1795

SOURCE: Bodleian Libraries, MS. 6633, letters, 1783–1805

No. 5 [Missing text – possibly [blank] street] April 2d 1795

My Dear Charlotte

I am utterly alarm'd in hearing nothing from you – the
Last was dated 27 Nov:^r – full of sadness & sorrow at the
going of Mr W¹ – to the Continent, which was to take place on
the following thursday – this letter I answer'd immediately, &
a True sympathizer in your affliction have I been my dear. I
Hope you next will be the Language of Joy & Thankfulness at
the Happy expectation of your husband, since no doubt you are
Living on hopes, as I am, tho' I durst not too much depend, of
the Coming of our Dear Connections back to us again – thr'o
the infinite mercies of our God – may his love dwell in our
Hearts, his Mercies on our memory's, and his Praise on our
Tongues for ever! – my Dear, I could fill a volume to you
With the account of the past winter – my burthens have been
Excessive, and that I have outliv'd them astonishes your young

¹ Lt Colonel Charles Augustus West, Charlotte Perry's husband. Joined 3rd Regiment of Foot Guards, 1784, as ensign. He saw service during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in Ireland, Holland, Egypt, Germany, Denmark, Portugal, and Spain. The 3rd Regiment of Foot Guards were sent to Holland in 1793 on Britain's entry into the Revolutionary War.

Freinds; but I am much worn, and look & feel at least 7
years older. I think you would hardly know me; especially
from the extream alteration caus'd by the loss of all my
Teeth from the Upper Jaw, and the Front Teeth from the under.
a deplorable loss! what is still an aggravation is, my teeth
Were all sound & good when they came out. The disorder
Was not in them but the Gums, which numberless applications
have been tried for in vain. I suffer'd incredibly with the
Looseness of my teeth before they came out, and was constrain'd
To rejoyce in that respect when they were gone. In other
respects I do indeed daily lament my loss, yet dare not
repine.

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Since many lose their Hearing and their Sight, I can only
Give you the outlines of my Winter's Situation -- one dear
Son expos'd to every possible danger in the West Indies², another
on the Continent³ – my Dear Vitula⁴ at home twice alarmingly
Ill – her sufferings great & various – her strength reduc'd
to so Weak a state, there was hardly possibility to keep her
from fainting all day & night long for sometime – the
Strongest nervous medecines, cordials, 4 or 5 glasses Wine

²Frederick Maitland (1763–1848), later a General, joined the 14th regiment, and served as a Marine at the Siege of Gibraltar in 1781. He was in the West Indies on the staff of the quarter master-general, General Cuyler. He returned to the West Indies in 1796 as secretary to General Sir Ralph Abercromby.

³ Captain Augustus Maitland was in the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards (Grenadier Guards) in Holland at this time.

⁴ Penelope's daughter was also called Penelope.

in the 24 hours, could scarcely keep life in her; and for a few days, a Lump was apprehended in her throat, which had it not mov'd thro' the infinite goodness of God, higher into the roof of her mouth, where it form'd a Large abcess, It must have been fatal – and even there, it was so near the entrance of her throat, that the Dear creature could not swallow anything but a Little liquid at a time, and that with so much pain it fatigu'd her beyond expression and was a distress to those who were about her to see it. it was the same even with swallowing her spittle. the abcess was Lanc'd several times – and discharg'd a vast quantity of blood & matter very offensive, & very terrible to Pass thro' the mouth every two or 3 minutes, you will imagine my dear. the discharge lasted 6 weeks at least. her strength was Long in recovering.⁵ She had suffer'd also greatly from acute Rheumatism in her head, Eye, Jaw & Neck on the left side. She was all Patience & goodness thro' all, & as I trust she Will be better in health for the discharge of so much humour, So

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I also hope Spiritual benefit will arise from her Sufferings, and the experiences of God's Supporting & delivering mercy. She delighted to hear the Word of God & any book written in

⁵ It is possible that Vitula was suffering from Quincy.

Conformity to it – How great was my distress, that I could only read
to her A very little at a time, and often was oblig'd to give it
Over. my nerves were so weak, and my spirits so agitated wth
My various Burthens, that After reading a few minutes, I
Was so Hysterical, I could not go on if the King had been there
To Command me. I hurt myself often extreamly by my
Efforts beyond my Powers to go thro' this duty – Vesta⁶ was
Most Willing to have done it; but was Call'd another way
Perpetually, and Indeed both her nerves & Lungs are terribly
Weak. I bless God – Vitula is pure well again; she has
Since, together with every Creature in the house been bad
With, \but recover'd of/ the Influenza Cold. myself very ill for near a fortnight.
I am sorry to say Vesta has still an ugly Cough & Soreness
wth. Pain on her Lungs, which oblige her to live very low, but
She is so far better within these few days, that she ventures
on a little Wine in Water. the Servants were very ill; two at
a time keeping their beds, & the House a Scene of confusion.
My dear old Servant whom you remember left us on Tuesday
Last – regretted, lamented & Miss'd by all of us – by none, you
May imagin, like me & the Nuns. it is a dreadfull blow on
Our Comfort – but if she had married to her advantage, it w^d
have been one mitigation of the misfortune – at present
Nothing can be expected but want & misery, as soon as her

⁶ Nickname for Penelope's daughter, Charlotte.

wages, which

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Was a very Considerable sum, are expended, near 54£!
a fine fortune for a Jobb coachman with such a Wife.
she took your address in writing in order to call on you
when she could get time for the walk – and she will give
you some account of us. I wish'd to have sent something
by her, but fear'd accidents, as it was uncertain when she
might be able to call. I long, my dear friend, for an
account of you – how are you in your health? how do you
go on with your employment? how are your dear Babes,⁷
and what accounts does Mr W: give you of himself in his let=
=ters? and have you heard from or seen your unhappy
Father? Judge of my astonishment to read in “the Times”
2 Evenings ago, “that he had escap'd to England, was taken
up in Kentish Town last Wednesday (sen'night) and in
Custody of the Sheriffs of Middlesex, being under an Outlaw=
=ry.”⁸ I suppose he was encourag'd (as well he might
be) to think he would be safe, since those \7/ Traitors from the
Tower were acquitted – upon whom so much Treason
Was found & pass'd over. I dare say your Father is
Perfectly secure, and therefore hope you will be Easy about

⁷ Charles Edward born 26 January 1790; George Innes Perry 28 January 1792; Edward Augustus c. 1794.

⁸ The Times (London, England), Monday, March 30, 1795, pg. 3; Issue 950330, refers to Captain Sampson Perry (1747–1823) surgeon, author, military commander, newspaper proprietor of *The Argus*, arrested on charges of libel; he was the father of Charlotte Perry.

him. he was, after 3 years experience of the French
Liberty and Happiness, Pritty heart-sick of them I imagin
and of starving among them for by all accounts they are
In extream want of all necessaries. Oh may it please
God to Convince yr Father of all his errors & “create in him
In him [*sic*] a new heart & a right spirit”[.]⁹ I suppose S-
Is with him - wherever he is – adieu, my dear Freind
I am call’d off to write a letter of Business, and remain
With the Nuns kindest & best Wishes, your affect[ionat]e faithfull freind
Mary Turing
[-Penelope Maitland]¹⁰

⁹ Psalm 51:10, Ezekiel 36:26.

¹⁰ ‘Mary Turing’ in the original hand, overwritten with ‘Penelope Maitland’ later.