



Nancy fought back by publicly rebutting Jack's accusations in a letter, saying she had just learned of his accusations of October 31, 1814. Jack's letter to her and her January 16, 1815 reply are in a pamphlet, dated 1888, at the Lipscomb Library of Randolph College, formerly Randolph-Macon Women's College, in Lynchburg, Virginia, entitled *A Spicy Correspondence Between John Randolph of Roanoke and His Cousin Nancy*. It notes that "as a literary performance this letter of Mrs. Morris' is entitled to rank as one of the finest specimens of English composition anywhere to be found, equaling if not exceeding in vigor and point, as well as elegance in form of expression, the celebrated letters of Junius."

Junius was the pseudonym of an English political writer who, in letters to the London Public Audience from 1769 to 1772, attacked George III and his ministers. Nancy's letter to Jack brought the facts into the open and settled a few scores with others. She did not, however, break her promise to Dick, exacted by him before his death, to not speak publicly of his seduction of her.

"Morrissania, January 16, 1815

Sir:

My husband yesterday communicated to me for the first time your letter of the last of October, together with that which accompanied it, directed to him.

In your letter to my husband, you say, 'I wish I could withhold the blow but I must in your case do what under a change of circumstances I would have you do unto me.' This, Sir, seems fair and friendly. It seems, Sir, as if you wished to apprise Mr. Morris and him only of circumstances important to his happiness and honor, though fatal to my reputation, leaving it in his power to cover them in oblivion or display them to the world as the means of freeing him from a monster unfit to live. But this was mere seeming. Your real object was widely different.

You have professed a sense of gratitude for obligations you suppose my husband to have laid you under. . . . 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 have him, whom you announce as your heir . . . dependent on the charity of a negro's concubine?

You say I confine my husband a prisoner in his house that there may be no witnesses of my lewd amours, and have driven away his friends and old 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 misdeeds. . . .

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 (tho it is not true) 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?

People of proper feelings 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 crimes, will readily suspect others, and condemn without proof on a mere hearsay, on . . . instigations of a malevolent heart.

Those who possess a clear conscience and sound mind, will look through your letter for some proof of my guilt. They will look in vain. You have thought proper to found suspicions on suspicions of your nephew, and . . . you have the insolence to impute crime at which nature revolts.

You . . . say that you mention a piece of evidence in your possession – a letter which I wrote on leaving Virginia . . . the very mention of it destroys your credibility with honorable minds. If you had the feelings of a man of honor, you would have known that there are things the communication of which involves that injunction. You have heard of principle and pretend to justify the breach of confidence by my want of respect for your name. Formerly Jack Randolph – now ‘John Randolph of Roanoke.’ It was then a want of respect to the great John Randolph of Roanoke to say he had done the honor of offering his hand to his poor cousin Nancy.

While on the chapter of self-contradiction, (which, with all due respect to ‘John Randolph of Roanoke,’ make up the history of his life) I must notice a piece of evidence not contained in your letter. I have already hinted at the indelicacy of leaving your nephew so long in my care. . . . You pretend to have discovered, all at once in this house, the confirmation of your suspicions, but surely the suspicion was sufficient to prevent a person having a pretense to delicacy from subjecting himself to such obligation. One word, however, as to this sudden discovery made by your great sagacity.

Recollect, Sir, when you rose from table to leave Morrisania, you put in my husband’s hand a note to my sister expressing your willingness that she and her son should pass the winter in his house. Surely, the discovery must have been made at that time. You will recollect, too, some other marks of confidence and affection, let me add 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. . . . When you entered this house, and when you left it, you took me in your arms, you pressed me to your bosom, you impressed upon my lips a kiss which I received as a token of friendship from a near relation. Did you then 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?

As to the fact communicated shortly before I left Virginia. That your brother Theodoric 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, 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, Theodoric. 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. . . . 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. . . . It was your troublesome attentions which induced Richard to inform you of my engagement. At that time, my father had other views. Your property . . . was 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. Under these circumstances, I was left at Bizarre, a girl, not seventeen, with the man she loved. I was betrothed to him, and considered him as my husband in the presence of that God whose name you presume to invoke on occasions the most trivial and for purposes the most malevolent. 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 imputations against us both, circulated by that kind of friendship which you have shown to my husband, nor the awful scene, with which you attempt to blacken his memory, could induce him to betray the sister of his wife, the wife of his brother; I repeat it, Sir, the crime with which you now 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 now 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 putting me first on my trial! we should both have swung on the same gibbet and the foul stain of incest and murder been stamped on his memory. . . . This, Sir, is the language you presume to address to me, enclosed to my husband for his inspection, after having been already communicated to other people. . . What must be the indignation . . . to behold a wretch rake up the ashes of his deceased brother to blast his fame? Who is there of nerve so strong as not to shudder at your savage regret that we did not swing on the same gibbet? On the melancholy occasion you have thought proper to bring forward there was the strictest examination. Neither your brother or myself had done anything to excite enmity, yet we were subjected to an unpitying persecution. The severest scrutiny took place; you know it. He was acquitted to the joy of 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!"